WITHHELD MINDS: PARA-NOVELISTIC FORM AND THE AESTHETICS OF EVASION IN AMERICAN FICTION, 1840-1930

by
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{Abstract}

My dissertation provides an original account of the significance of recessive and withdrawn character in a series of canonical nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century American fictions. In classical studies of the novel such as Erich Auerbach's *Mimesis*, Ian Watt's *The Rise of the Novel*, Wayne Booth's *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, and Dorrit Cohn's *Transparent Minds*, as well as in more recent work by partisans of the Ethical Turn in narrative studies, the novel's special capacity to make available to its readers the private experiences of imaginary characters has been crucial to accounts of why, and to what end, we read fiction. My dissertation seeks to contribute to previous understandings of the transatlantic phenomenology of reading and the enterprise of the novel by examining a preoccupation with central figures who shrink from or foil diegetic and readerly attentions. I argue that the fatigue, frustration, apologia, and wistfulness that define the encounter between narratorial presence and protagonist in a trans-generic set of texts by Edgar Allan Poe, Herman Melville, Henry James, and Nella Larsen index anxieties concomitant to the "enchantment of interiority," as Thomas Pavel puts it, with which the nineteenth-century novel has been credited. Moreover, these texts' shared animating dynamic of unfulfilled expectation and thwarted desire, akin to what Lauren Berlant calls "cruel optimism," presents alternative edifications to those by which the value of our investments in rich interiority has tended to be gauged. If literary character has been thought of as gratifying, or worth "caring about," primarily in proportion to the extent to which a text grants knowledge of and intimacy with it, Poe, Melville, James, and Larsen offer an auxiliary repertoire of pleasures and rewards associated with characters by whom narrator and reader, by extension, feel rebuffed. The "aesthetics of evasion" in which they traffic emerges not only in opposition to the novel—in para-novelistic forms such as the

tale, novella, and romance—but thrive within the precincts of late-century psychological realism itself.

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If I have written a dissertation about the attractions and edifications of withdrawn or aloof subjectivities in fiction, I live a life so rich in generous, abundant, and affirming presences that it is hard to know how to begin to express my gratitude for all the ways in which they oblige me to believe more strongly in, and more fully inhabit, my *own* subjectivity. My first thanks must go to my primary advisor, Chris Nealon, without whom (the cliché of the sentiment notwithstanding) this dissertation would not have been possible. Working closely with him over the past three years, often across considerable geographical distance, has been a tremendous intellectual gift—one that I know will accompany me for the rest of my life. His careful, patient, and incisive readings of each chapter draft and his many (I am tempted to say tireless) conversations with me about how they might be refined and expanded have done wonders to fortify me through the many phases of composing this manuscript. Moreover, the steadfast promise of these dialogues—over email, Skype, and, when I've been luckiest, good espresso in DC—has made thinking and writing, far more often than not, a gladly anticipated daily practice. Not surprisingly, perhaps, for someone with such insight into historical emotion, Chris is just as perspicacious about future feeling. He has always quietly but firmly assured me that extrinsic gratification will attend serious intellectual pursuits so long as these pursuits remain their own most compelling reward. In a profession that can sometimes seem to ride on elusive external markers of success, this message from someone I so deeply respect has been an abiding source of encouragement and discipline.

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Without Matt, nothing bears imagining. My heart, as he knows, belongs to him.

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{Introduction: Looking by Glances}

1.0.

The Western mimetic tradition establishes a concurrence between representation and illumination. In Plato's *Symposium*, Diotima defines *poiesis* as that which happens when "something comes into existence which has not existed before,"[1] and this act of production consists in leading forward, as Giorgio Agamben puts it, "from concealment and nonbeing into the *light of presence*."[2] Within the nineteenth-century's dominant form of literary representation, the realist novel, transparency serves as an adjunct to the luminousness through which classical aesthetics framed poetical ontology. In other words, the diegetic presence of novelistic characters is understood to brighten in proportion to the extent to which the text enables readers to peer into their hearts and minds,[3] and granting readers this ability is central not only to how the task of the novel was conceived during the nineteenth century, but to how the benefits of novel-reading have been construed in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. As Dorrit Cohn reminds us, in her seminal study of the crucial role that "the mimesis of consciousness" plays in the history of the novel: "the special lifelikeness of narrative fiction…depends on what writers and readers know least in life: how another mind thinks, another body feels."[4] Furthermore, the semantic field surrounding the aesthetics of penetrative vision cultivated by formal realism quickly ramifies into a rhetoric of solidity and rotundity. The novel's arsenal of worlding techniques, so reliant on the

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[1] See Plato, *Symposium* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), section 205c.
[2] Giorgio Agamben, *The Man Without Content*, Trans. Georgia Albert, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 59.
[3] See, in particular, Peter Brooks, *Realist Vision*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005).
[4] Dorrit Cohn, *Transparent Minds: Narrative Modes for Presenting Consciousness in Fiction*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 5. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text.

optical,[5] are also credited with conferring heft and roundness—attributes that by the middle of the nineteenth century attain a commensurability with realism that persists to this day.

The Enlightenment's imaginative genre par excellence, then, is freighted by what Ian Watt calls its "unselective amplitude of presentation."[6] Beholden to empirical and rationalist standards of knowledge, it is obliged to represent the "minute particulars" of life, to convey with scalpel-esque subtlety the inner lives of its characters, and to execute grand, poly-nodal plots. This results in a prolix and exhaustive form contained within a literally cumbersome object: the greater its epistemological veracity, the ontologically (and materially) heavier the novel becomes. Moreover, the thicker a novel's verisimilitude—the more detailed the universe it confects and the people who inhabit it—the more easily it is seen to invite the sympathy of its readers, which in turn reinforces the readers' belief in the reality of characters. This circular psychology of reading, as Rebecca Tierney-Hines points out, renders the desire for books a function of the reader's appetite for better self-knowledge, which she achieves through identificatory connections with imaginary beings.[7]

The present study makes the case that the emphasis on absorption, vicariousness, and sympathetic identification within the history of the novel has tended to eclipse the role that rebarbative or illegible subjectivity play both within the purview of formal realism itself, as symptoms of disquietude about its agenda, and along its flanks, as objections to the "extensive," companionate reading it encourages.[8] In the chapters that follow, I argue that a set of major American writers between the second half of the nineteenth century and first

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[5] See *Realist Vision*, chapter 1, for an overview of the novel's ocularcentric aesthetics.
[6] Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson, Fielding*, (Berkeley: UCPress, 1957), 175. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text.
[7] See Rebecca Tierney-Hynes, *Novel Minds: Philosophers and Romance Readers, 1680-1740*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan), 2012.
[8] See H.J. Jackson, *Romantic Readers: The Evidence of Marginalia*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005). Chapter two, "Socializing with Books," discusses the phenomenon of books "becom[ing] substitutes for human contact" and evaluates the ways in which marginalia reflected the reader "responding to the book as a companion" (Jackson, 123).

decades of the twentieth resisted the notions of repletion, sheerness, and depth championed by the novel as a hegemonic form, and by realism as a dominant aesthetic philosophy. Across texts as wide-ranging as Edgar Allan Poe's detective tales and Henry James's *The Portrait of a Lady*, I track a shared aversion to the types of knowledge, ways of feeling, and topologies of desire cherished by the realist novel. I further demonstrate that these fictions are concerned not only with transparency's others, but with mapping an antipodal geography for absorption's accessories: namely, vicariousness, sympathy, identification. These texts, I argue, pursue modes of representation in which retreat becomes constitutive of presence and withholding minds becomes coextensive with the process of bringing them forth.

In *Subjects on Display*, Beth Newman writes that "accounts of subjectivity in relation to vision…have devoted themselves almost exclusively to the subject as observer" or "the subject as *one who sees*."[9] The readings that follow are, if nothing else, an extended meditation on "the equally constitutive experience of being seen"[10] and on "the subject produced in the experience of *being seen* or *looked a*t," which have "not been historicized with any thoroughness."[11] While my work is far from historicist, I seek to provide a nineteenth-century literary genealogy for the evasive subject who resists being seen, from Poe's liminal detective to Melville's rhythmic "original" to James's reluctant heroine to Larsen's lambent passer.

[9] Beth Newman, *Subjects on Display: Psychoanalysis, Social Expectation, and Victorian Femininity*, (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2004), 138.
[10] Ibid., 134.
[11] Ibid., 138.

1.1. Historical Contexts: A Culture of Scopophilia

According to cultural theorist Jonathan Crary, a "reorganization of vision… that produced a new kind of observer"[12] took place during the first half of the nineteenth century, and this "reorganization" heightened in vigor during the two decades immediately preceding the one with which this project begins. Between 1850 and the turn of the twentieth century, in Jean-Louis Comolli's iconic formulation, "the nineteenth century lived in a sort of frenzy of the visible."[13] This ethos of looking, by critical consensus among the epitomizing facets of nineteenth-century culture in North America and Western Europe, is perhaps best emblematized by the "defining moment of Victorian visual culture"[14] that punctuated it almost precisely at the midway point: London's Great Exhibition. Opened by Queen Victoria herself on May 1, 1851, this first World's Fair quickly became synonymous with the architectural tour de force that housed it: the Crystal Palace, a nearly 1,000,000-square-foot structure erected in Hyde Park to shelter more than 100,000 objects congregated under its roof for this landmark occasion—from the world's largest diamond, the Koh-i-noor, to a hydraulic press to various sorts of apiaries.[15] The Crystal Palace was a literal "skin of glass"[16] that instantiated the widespread cultural mania for display.

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[12] Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990), 3. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text using the abbreviation *TO*.
[13] See Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Nineteenth-Century French Thought*, (Berkeley: UC Press, 1994).
[14] Rachel Teukolsky, "The Sublime Museum: Looking at Art in the Great Exhibition," *Victorian Prism: Refractions of the Crystal Palace* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2007), 84-100, 84.
[15] See *Tallis's History and Description of the Crystal Palace, and the Exhibition of the World's Industry in 1851*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).
[16] See Isobel Armstrong, *Victorian Glassworlds*: *Glass Culture and the Imagination, 1830-1880*, (Oxford: OUP: 2008).

Fueled by technological and chemical discoveries, the nineteenth century "perfected or devised" a vast number of "observation systems."[17] Early precursors to cinema, such as the zoetrope, the panorama, the daguerreotype, and eventually the camera, were enabled by tools for measuring ever-more-minute intervals of time, and these scientific breakthroughs began to render perceptible what had previously been—by virtue of its size or velocity—beyond or below the scale of the human eye. Thus, this era of panoramic and microscopic vision—potently metaphorized by the bourgeoning ubiquity of plate glass around mid-century—was linked to accelerated speed and magnified scale. This was the period when railroad lines multiplied across the landscape, opening up new vistas – both literal and figurative – and bringing the east and west coasts into communication with one another. It was also a period that, alongside the steady westward expansion of US territory, witnessed an unprecedented growth in the size and complexity of American society. The visibility of the individual citizen also came to correspond, during this time, to its administrative or bureaucratic footprint and to its statistical quantification.[18] Far from attempting to gloss here the vast historiography surrounding the hunger for visual stimuli during the Victorian era, and the invitations to indulge it that proliferated with the steady advance of consumer

[17] Juergen Osterhammel, *The Transformation of the World: A Global History of the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 41. Also relevant is Walter Benjamin's massive early-twentieth-century compendium of the previous century's commodifying animus, *The Arcades Project*, whose wide-ranging montages overwhelmingly cluster around eye-summoning phenomena: the Parisian arcades, *magasins de nouveautés*, fashion, hausmannization, exhibitions, advertising, collecting, flanerie, Parisian street life, panoramas, mirrors, electric lighting, railroads, and photography.

[18] See Crary's gloss of Foucault in *TO*: "nineteenth-century modernity is inseparable from the way in which dispersed mechanisms of power coincide with new modes of subjectivity, and [Foucault] thus details a range of pervasive and local techniques for controlling, maintaining, and making useful new multiplicities of individuals…The management of subjects depended above all on the accumulation of knowledge about them, whether in medicine, education, psychology, physiology, the rationalization of labor, or child care. Out of this knowledge came what Foucault calls 'a very real technology, the technology of individuals'" (15); see also Audrey Jaffe's *The Affective Life of the Average Man: The Victorian Novel and the Stock-Market Graph*, for an account of the Victorian mania for numerical and demographic codification: "[E]merging social sciences such as anthropology and sociology sorted individuals and populations into categories of nation, race, class, and gender. From the 1830s onward, the developing fields of statistics used numbers, tables, and graphs with increasing frequency to enumerate and map selected aspects of selected populations" (2).

capitalism, I want merely to suggest that the ascendance of a cultural idiom of spectacularity provides the context in which the writers I discuss crafted characters that elude regard, shirk inspection, or circumvent knowing. Victorian ocularcentrism,[19] I argue, helps us to understand the urgent appeal of the withheld minds I investigate in these pages. Pervasive solicitations of the eye during the latter half of the nineteenth-century, argues Crary, drastically addled attention:

> it is in the late nineteenth century…that the problem of attention becomes a fundamental issue. It was a problem whose centrality was directly related to the emergence of a social, urban, psychic, and industrial field increasingly saturated with sensory input…It is possible to see one crucial aspect of modernity as an ongoing crisis of attentiveness.[20]

It is this "crisis" around which the aesthetics of evasion secretes, and it is within the ambit of spectacularity that the sensibility for withholding and withdrawal gains momentum and urgency.

As scholars such as Kate Flint, Andrew Miller, and Isobel Armstrong have shown, the re-organization of optical paradigms during the nineteenth century was not only synchronous with, but actively abetted, the consolidation of formal realism.[21] In *Novels Behind Glass*, Miller establishes the close affinity between the form of the novel and nineteenth-century cultures of spectacularity. The novel harnessed, and was nourished by, the "'world of show,'" that led to the dissemination of "elaborate fantasies of consumption, sensuous experiences of imagined acquisition."[22] Rapid urbanization, industrialization, and the federation of local economies made on-lookers and shoppers of a majority of citizens.

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[19] See Jay, *Downcast Eyes*.
[20] Jonathan Crary, *Suspensions of Perception: Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1999), 13-14. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text using the abbreviation *SP*.
[21] See, for example, Kate Flint, *The Victorians and the Visual Imagination*, *(*Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Andrew Miller, *Novels Behind Glass: Commodity Culture and Victorian Narrative*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); and Armstrong, *Victorian Glassworlds*.
[22] Miller, *Novels Behind Glass*, 1. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text.

The arena of printed media[23] was saturated with paper ephemera such as the *feuilleton*, the physiology,[24] and increasingly sophisticated advertisements[25] that fostered passive, if incessant, reading patterns among metropolitan demographics. The etymology of the verb 'advertise'—which derives from the Latin *ad vertere*, meaning "to turn toward"—signals the prevailing ethos of the period, during which inducements to observe and to spend increased exponentially.[26]

Literary scholars have thus long been trained to appreciate the ways in which the history of the nineteenth-century novel is enmeshed with the contemporaneous upheavals of the visual world, which altered the experience, physiology, and scientific understanding of human perception.[27] As Flint puts it, mid-Victorian "society was characterized not just by the accelerated expansion of diverse opportunities for differing sorts of spectatorship, but by

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[23] Mass circulation began during this period. Starting in the 1830s, and in the thirty years between 1870 and 1900, the world's largest mass press underwent an expansion in excess of five-fold. Furthermore, the penny press was inaugurated in the United States, which offered cheap newspapers for the masses, and US daily newspapers enjoyed the highest rates of circulation in the world: in 1860, the *New York Herald* (founded in 1835), had the highest daily circulation in the world, at 77,000, while the *New York Tribune* had the highest figures of weekly circulation, at 200,000 (Osterhammel 36). These numbers were partly a technological coup: in 1846, the first rotary press was built in Philadephia, while between1886 and 1890, a German immigrant in Baltimore, Ottmar Mergenthaler, pioneered a new "keyboard-operated 'hot metal' linotype machine that represented the most important advance [in print technology – and allowed for a massive scaling up in print] since Gutenberg's movable-type printing press" (Osterhammel, 35).

[24] See Jerrold Siegel, *Bohemian Paris: Culture, Politics, and the Boundary of Bourgeois Life, 1830-1930*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986).

[25] Although the origins of commercial advertising can be traced back to the early eighteenth century, its integration into the typology of the urban streetscape accelerated as the nineteenth century advanced, reaching a kind of meridian with the establishment of the first advertising agency by Volney B. Palmer in Philadelphia in 1841.

[26] There is, of course, a sinister twin to nineteenth-century spectacularity: this ethos of display was abetted by, and converted to a form of profit, the tragic genocide of the native populations and the gradual extinction or sudden annihilation of traditional ways of life. The documentation and curation of this ethnographic attrition were enabled by the technologies mentioned above, which bear an ambivalent responsibility for directing the collective gaze toward what was being lost even while making it picturesque, as Rebecca Solnit succinctly and poignantly explains: "everything spectacular in the West was always being sent East for exhibition" (Rebecca Solnit, *River of Shadows: Eadweard Muybridge and the Technological Wild West*, 23). See also Lee Clark Mitchell, *Witnesses to a Vanishing America: The Nineteenth-Century Response*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981).

[27] The 1820s and 1830s saw the inauguration of the mass production of glass, the first stirrings of photography, the rising hegemony of landscape painting and panoramas, the establishment of the commercial railroad, the widespread installation of municipal gasworks, and the advent of tools for measuring minute intervals of time. See Jimena Canales, *A Tenth of a Second: A History*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

a growing concern with the very practice of looking,"[28] and amid these optical changes convulsing the empirical world and recalibrating the very biology of vision, the novel emerged as a bastion of connections and intimacies that were increasingly menaced by obsolescence. Wolfgang Schivelbusch notes of rail travel, which was ever more commonplace:

> While the railroad caused the foreground to disappear, it also replaced looking at the landscape with a new practice that had not existed previously. Reading while traveling became almost obligatory. The dissolution of reality and its resurrection as panorama thus became agents for total emancipation from the traversed landscape: the traveler's gaze could then move into an imaginary surrogate landscape, that of his book. By the mid-nineteenth century, reading while traveling had become an established custom.[29]

The dialectics of nineteenth-century novel-reading are distilled in this passage, which articulates the ways in which books (the implication is, fiction in particular) at once rebutted the alienating visuality of modernity (in this case, "the dissolution of reality and its resurrection as panorama" induced by unprecedented speed), while at the same time substituting for the sensorial assaults of nineteenth-century technologies a "surrogate landscape" whose hold over the imagination derived in large part from its supplications of vision.

1.2. Against Sympathy : Toward an Ethics of Slight(ed)ness

In his 1879 biography of Nathaniel Hawthorne, a young Henry James marvels at the avidity with which his senior had chronicled quotidian minutiae in his notebooks, paying even the most "trivial accidents" and "common and casual things" the tribute of a "*memoranda.*" Infamously, James is astonished less by the inclusiveness of these records than by all that is missing from them:

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[28] Flint, *Victorians and the Visual Imagination*, 2. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text.
[29] Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey: The Industrialization of Time and Space in the 19th Century*, (Berkeley: UC Press, 1977).

> [O]ne might enumerate the items of high civilization, as it exists in other countries, which are absent from the texture of American life, until it should become a wonder to know what was left. No State, in the European sense of the word, and indeed barely a specific national name. No sovereign, no court, no personal loyalty, no aristocracy, no church, no clergy, no army, no diplomatic service, no country gentlemen, no palaces, no castles, nor manors, nor old country-houses, nor parsonages, nor thatched cottages nor ivied ruins; no cathedrals, nor abbeys, nor little Norman churches; no great Universities nor public schools—no Oxford, nor Eton, nor Harrow; no literature, no novels, no museums, no pictures, no political society, no sporting class—no Epsom nor Ascot! Some such list as that might be drawn up of the absent things in American life—especially in the American life of forty years ago, the effect of which, upon an English or a French imagination, would probably as a general thing be appalling.[30]

To be fair to James, "a good deal" remains after the sum of these lacunae ("absent things") has been calculated. Nevertheless, the question of cultural benightedness is clearly a lively one for him, and (in a tone whose elitism verges regrettably on sneering) he is worrying a paradox that lies at the very root of America's very nationhood: born during the Enlightenment, and founded on Enlightenment principles, by the latter half of the nineteenth century the United States remained to a large extent unfettered by "the items of high civilization" that ballasted other Enlightenment societies. Bracketing for now the (in)judiciousness of this assessment of what James elsewhere calls the "American scene," I want to suggest here that his notion of its "coldness,…thinness,…blankness" might operate as a useful heuristic with which to approach the psychological and physical meagerness that I investigate in the pages that follow.

James saw America's material scarcity as intangibly bound up with the problem of slight minds and bodies in fiction: if he is intrigued by the ways in which Hawthorne's notebooks transcribe the vacuity of a country without cruciform abbeys or organized equestrianism, he is equally curious about the gossamer personhood that circulates within his romances, writing of *The Scarlet Letter* that "[t]he people strike me not as characters, but as

[30] Henry James, *Literary Criticism: Essays on Literature, American Writers, English Writers.* (New York: The Library of America, 1984), 351-52.

representatives, very picturesquely arranged, of a single state of mind" ("NH," 404). He delivers a similar verdict on the denizens of the house of the seven gables: "they are all figures rather than characters—they are all pictures rather than persons" ("NH," 413). Meanwhile, whereas "the character of Zenobia…" is "the finest thing in *The Blithedale Romance*" because she "strikes [James] as the nearest approach that Hawthorne has made to the complete creation of a person" ("NH," 420), the hero of *The Marble Faun* "is rather vague and impalpable; he says too little in the book, shows himself too little, and falls short…of being a creation" ("NH," 445). The feyness and etiolation that James ascribes to Hawthorne's characters (the "subtle conception[s]" of a "miasmatic conscience") are echoed in protagonists across a range of mid- to late-nineteenth-century American fictions that can't be reduced to allegory or romance *tout court*.

The affinities between America, as a national institution, and the novel, as a generic one, are numerous and well-rehearsed: both were fledgling, or "rising," during the eighteenth century; both are grounded, at least nominally, in a catholic, liberal, and democratic ethos; both are rationalist projects. At the same time, however, there is something askance about the American novel vis-à-vis its English counterpart, as Leslie Fiedler's classic study, *Love and Death in the American Novel*, deftly illustrates. According to Fiedler, the novel's New World incarnation is distinguished by a "desperate need to avoid"[31] themes and concerns that by the eighteenth century were de rigueur in all subcategories of the novel, chiefly heterosexual liaisons and mortality (Fiedler, 25). This endemic obliquity has largely been theorized as "America's 'romance' of the novel," which "gave Americans a counter-theory of the

[31] Leslie Fiedler, *Love and Death in the American Novel*, (Urbana-Champaign: Dalkey Archive Press, 1960), 25. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text.

American novel."[32] My dissertation examines the ways in which canonical, inter-generic nineteenth-century American fictions expressed deep ambivalence about realist imperatives and conventions, arguing that the romance/realism dichotomy fails to accommodate what was in fact a suppler and far more heterogenous landscape of dissent and misgiving surrounding the novel. The para-realist cartography laid out in the chapters that follow is thus more haphazard and less organized than the comparatively tidy division Hawthorne makes between the terrestrial domains of realism and the aerial jurisdictions of romance.[33] From this vantage, Hawthornian romance partakes in a more broadly diffuse resistance to the novel—one that exceeds the designation of romance even as it shares romance's squeamishness about producing persons who act as proxies for ourselves.

Since the formalist and post-structuralist insistence on "decoupling…literary characters from their implied humanness" has ceased to be "the price of entry into a theoretical perspective on characterization" (Woloch, 15), accounts of nineteenth-century literary characterization—from the historicist to the neurocognitive—have flourished. The late 1990s and early aughts in particular saw new character studies thrive, helmed by masterful work by Deidre Lynch and Alex Woloch,[34] and the first decade of the twenty-first century has been marked by vibrant and sustained interest in the history and aesthetics of the novel

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[32] Homer Brown, "Prologue: Why the Story of the Origin of the (English) Novel Is an American Romance (If Not the Great American Novel)," *Cultural Institutions of the Novel*, Eds. Deidre Lynch and William B. Warner, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), 11-43. 31.

[33] See in particular the prefaces to *The House of the Seven Gables*, *The Blithedale Romance*, and *The Marble Faun*, as well House" (*The Scarlet Letter*).

[34] The vast body of work on character in the past several decades includes Deidre Lynch, *The Economy of Character: Novels, Market Culture, and the Business of Inner Meaning* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press,1998); Alex Woloch, *The One v. The Many: Minor Characters and the Space of the Protagonist in the Novel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), Sharrona Pearl, *About Faces: Physiognomy in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010); Christopher Lukasik, *Discerning Characters* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011); David Brewer, *The Afterlife of Character 1726-1825* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011); Blakey Vermeule, *Why Do We Care about Literary Characters?* (Baltimore: JHU Press, 2011); Omri Moses, *Out of Character: Modernism, Vitalism, Psychic Life* (Stanford: SUP, 2014); and Jonathan Kramnick, "Against Literary Darwinism," *Critical Inquiry* 37 (Winter 2011), 315-347.

more broadly.[35] My work draws inspiration from this reassurance that the history of the novel is far from complete, and I'm buoyed by the prospects—to all appearances happy—of Rita Felski's opening salvo to *New Literary History*'s 2011 special issue on character: "what is there left to say about [it]?"

In the pages that follow, the principal thing I say about it is that scholars have not yet begun to map the pleasures and solicitations of inaccessible and aloof subjectivity in mid-to late-nineteenth-century fiction. My primary focus on figures of withdrawal, however, partakes in a broader effort, first, to demonstrate that a set of otherwise disparate authors was deeply unsettled by the consolidations of verisimilar realism between 1840 and 1930 and, second, to chart some of the polyvalent implications of this shared diffidence toward the audacities of realist worlding. In my chapters on Edgar Allan Poe, Herman Melville, and Henry James, I offer an archaeology of demurrals from the pressures for characterological depth exerted by a bourgeoning middle-class readership across the long nineteenth century.[36] I also link these formal demurrals to cultural and book history, arguing that the widespread enthrallment to visual stimuli and revolutions in print technology made these writers' collective emphasis on *un*readability and opacity both dissonant and timely. In showing how, and with what consequences, Poe, Melville, and James register anxieties about the accomplishment of what Thomas Pavel has called the "enchantment of interiority,"[37] my dissertation seeks to enlarge the transatlantic phenomenology of nineteenth-century reading

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[35] Deidre Lynch and William B Warner, *Cultural Institutions of the Novel* (1996); Franco Moretti, *The Novel: Vols. 1-2* (2001-3); Nancy Armstrong, *How Novels Think: The Limits of Individualism from 1719-1900* (2005); Suzanne Keen, *Empathy and the Novel* (2007); Jonathan Arac, *Impure Worlds: The Institution of Literature in the Age of the Novel* (2011); David Kurnick, *Empty Houses* (2012); Franco Moretti, *Distant Reading* (2013), Thomas Pavel, *The Lives of the Novel* (2013); and C. Namwali Serpell, *Seven Modes of Uncertainty* (2014), Amanpal Garcha, *From Sketch to Novel: The Deveopment of Victorian Fiction* (2012).

[36] I am indebted for this claim to Suzie Asha Park's discussion of Frances Burney's resistance to these Romantic-era "demands for story" in *The Wanderer*. See "'All Agog to find her out' : Compulsory Narration in *The Wanderer*," *Recognizing the Romantic Novel: New Histories of British Fiction, 1780-1830*, (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008).

[37] Thomas Pavel, *The Lives of the Novel: A History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 201.

by examining texts that traffic in frustration, discomfiture, and yearning rather than attachment, affiliation, and proximity.

Through their interest in representing characters by whom narrator and (by extension) reader are rebuffed, Poe, Melville, James, and Nella Larsen prohibit readers from the cathexis of sympathy or the ego-eradicating respites of vicariousness, thereby extending the repertoire of pleasures and rewards associated with the novel's treatment of consciousness. The fatigue, exasperation, apologia, and longing that cross-hatch the encounter between narratorial presence and protagonist in this trans-generic ensemble of texts prohibit the reader from the recumbencies or self-suspensions of absorption and sympathetic identification in ways that awaken us to the multiplicity of ways we might think about what it meant to be "lost" in a book in the nineteenth an early-twentieth centuries. Jennifer Fleissner has discussed "tics" or "symptoms" that disrupt the Freudian and neurological etiologies underpinning the novel: the "too broadly drawn character, a weird detail, some moment of excess" that perforate "the surface of narrative" with "a mode at once residual (satire) or emergent (modernism) in relation to the novel's realism."[38] One way of articulating the subject of this project is to say that it investigates the "tic"'s obverse: it attends closely to the deficits and réculs that are affronts to, or foreclose on the possibility of, realism. In this project, I look at narrative trajectories that escape the forward, plot-dependent, Bildung-oriented movement of the novel and at hesitant narrators who fail to provide insight into the subjects with whom the narrative entrusts them.

Over the course of the nineteenth century, "sympathy…became the dominant model of feeling and a central principle by which the moral and literary value of the novel could be

[38] Jennifer Fleissner, "Symptamatology and the Novel," *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction*, Vol. 42, No. 3 (Fall 2009), 387-392, 390.

asserted,"[39] "displac[ing] wonder as literature's animating passion."[40] In classic twentieth-century studies of the novel such as Erich Auerbach's *Mimesis*, Ian Watt's *The Rise of the Novel*, Wayne Booth's *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, and Dorrit Cohn's *Transparent Minds*, as well as in more recent work by partisans of the Ethical Turn such as Martha Nussbaum, Dorothy Hale, and Peggy Kamuf, the novel's special capacity to "make available the experience of 'characters,' which can be assumed…by the reader as his or her subjective experience for the duration of the reading"[41] has been crucial to accounts of why, and to what end, we read novels. On one front, my project endeavors to expand the critical vocabulary surrounding readerly investments in character to accommodate those that exceed or bypass "imaginative identification" (Nandrea, 4). Even as it is being amended,[42] a master-narrative persists in which the nineteenth-century novel's utility and aspirations are reckoned in terms of moral edifications that derive from the intimacies of sympathy and identification. My project thus offers a counterthrust to the main trajectory of the ethical turn in literary criticism by analyzing the evasion of narrative attention—or, put somewhat differently, the ways in which narratives articulate a bad conscience about the attentions they bestow through the representation of the characterological wish to be left alone, fade away, or discreetly pass (on/by). In this dissertation, I suggest that the confection of interiority in nineteenth-century fiction was thought of, and experienced as, an encumbrance, both within and outside the text. My aim, then, is three-fold: to show how the wish or ability to evade diegetic regard is a prominent trope within the texts I examine; to demonstrate that this trope has structural implications for the authors I study, who all engage it as a commentary

[39] See Lorri G. Nandrea, *Misfit Forms: Paths Not Taken by the British Novel*, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015), 5. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text.
[40] See Sarah Tindal Kareem, *Eighteenth-Century Fiction and the Reinvention of Wonder*, (Oxford: OUP, 2014), 72.
[41] Peggy Kamuf, *Book of Addresses*, (Stanford: SUP, 2005), 141. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text.
[42] See, for example, C. Namwali Serpell, *Seven Modes of Uncertainty*, (Harvard: HUP, 2014); Andrea Henderson, *Romantic Identities: Varieties of Subjectivity 1774-1830*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); and Nancy Yousef, *Romantic Intimacy*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013).

on or way of reconciling themselves to the apparatus of the novel; and, finally, how we might frame the implications of this trope within the later critical idiom of the Ethical Turn: to what sorts of pleasures or dissatisfactions does it give rise, and how might we qualify their interpersonal value or utility?

The encounter with dense or "elaborated" imaginary subjectivities (to which readers easily ascribed a certain sentience) became the hallmark of novel reading over the course of the long nineteenth century: Deidre Lynch's extraordinary work has traced how "particularized, rounded characters" with "expanded inner li[ves]" and "psychological depth" emerged as the pieces de resistance of narrative fiction from the Romantic era onwards (*EC*, 126), and Jonathan Arac reminds us that during this period "depths, recesses, [and] intimacies" became the defining features of literary characterization.[43] We might say, then, that nineteenth-century character is inherently recessive in epistemological terms: the knowledge through which it is made accessible to the reader is mined from the nooks and crannies of consciousness. Yet, the exposures through which characterological presence in the novel is conventionally syncretized—most notably, omniscience and free indirect discourse (*erlebte Rede*, *discours indirect libre*)—levy exigent demands on the reader: nineteenth-century character imposes itself affectively, and nineteenth-century writers and their readers were earnest about forging and assuming these narrative intimacies.[44] In *Strange Fits of Passion*, Adela Pinch demonstrates that Jane Austen's *Persuasion* "explores what it feels like to be a reader…by connecting this feeling to what the presence of other people feels like,"

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[43] Jonathan Arac, "*Hamlet*, *Little Dorrit*, and the History of Character," *Impure Worlds: The Institution of Literature in the Age of the Novel* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2011), 34-46. 41. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text.

[44] Indeed, the wary and often censorious attitude toward fiction, in particular toward novel-reading women, in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century societies, hinges on the identificational dimension of novelistic hero[in]es. It bears mentioning that this attitude was especially rampant in America, since the fledgling nation lacked an indigenous tradition of non-utilitarian literature prior to the publication of the first American novel, *The Power of Sympathy: or, the Triumph of Nature*, in 1789.

analogizing "the influence reading can have on one's mind…to the influence of one person's mind over another's."[45] In finding that *Persuasion* "is skeptical of offering up consciousness as a realm of freedom impervious to others" and "warns that mental space is always impinged upon" (Pinch, 162), Pinch shows that the representation of consciousness encroached on readers' mental energies, attentions, and emotions. Nineteenth-century authors and readers were fully cognizant of this phenomenon, and the characterological affordances of depth and intimacy was understood to compensate for fiction's importunities and demands. Indeed, characters within nineteenth-century novels were frequently made to replicate "readinglike states of absorbed concentration" (Pinch, 160) in order to suggest that diegetic environments offered "consolation" for the shortcomings, boredom, and drudgeries of actual ones.

Rather than imposing on or swallowing up the reader's mind, the protagonists I examine are withdrawn, turned away, whittled down, and scattered apart in ways that attenuate their claims not only on other characters within the diegesis, but on readers themselves, even as these qualities heighten the attentions they attract. Thus, the man of the crowd, the detective, the clerk, the charlatan, the reluctant heiress, and the figure of racial passing might be thought of, in "phenomenophilic" terms, as "too slight to present a demand."[46] By declining to capitulate to the popular "pressure to disclose depths" (Park, 127), the texts I look at deny the reader the abeyances of "losing [her] mind in another."[47] To the contrary, these narratives let go, leave be, give up, and stop short of providing the

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[45] Adela Pinch, "Lost in a Book," *Strange Fits of Passion: Epistemologies of Emotion, Hume to Austen*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 137-163, 139. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text.
[46] Rei Terada, *Looking Away: Phenomenality and Dissatisfaction, Kant to Adorno*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 18. Terada discusses the phenomenological dimensions of negligible presence, which alleviates external pressures precisely because of its triviality and lesser urgency.
[47] See Edgar Allan Poe's 1836 review of Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, "The Life and Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe, which originally appeared in *The Southern Literary Messenger*. Poe admired Defoe's novel for facilitating precisely this possibility.

reader a mind in which to dwell or immerse her own. These protagonists instantiate a faint or restive centrality that privileges a wistful or estranged encounter over one that enables sympathetic identification or didactic instruction.

The texts I look at refrain from rich displays of consciousness, offering instead impoverished insights or partial perspectives. They traffic in characterizations that halt at the threshold of psychological disclosure, embodiments that are silhouettish or waiflike, experience that is asymmetrical to *Bildung*, and anemic plots that either lack a telos toward which they advance or whose impact on a central consciousness is sloughed off. My work offers a lither account of the ambivalence with which these narratives summon narratorial and readerly attentions, thinking in fresh ways about how characters like Dupin, Bartleby, the confidence-man, Isabel Archer, and Clare Kendry resemble one another in their failure to reward the attentions they attract. If literary character has been thought of as gratifying, or worth "caring about," primarily in proportion to the extent to which a text grants knowledge of and intimacy with it, these texts suggest that character might compel care precisely by being so difficult to care *about*, by flouting the expectations nourished by protracted attention. At stake in my work, then, are new ways of thinking about the relationship between empathy and the novel. In what ways do these texts negotiate different contractual terms with the reader? In what ways can they be said to inscribe or conscript her? How do they present alternative edifications to those by which the value of readers' investments in rich interiority has tended to be gauged?

1.3. Modest Apprehensions

Ample work has been done on the sublimity or over-zealousness of nineteenth-century characterization, and its tendency to overwhelm the reader with surfeit of information. Neil Hertz has discussed the "high mimetic realism" developed by George Eliot beginning around the middle of the nineteenth century as administering the effect of "cognitive overload, a losing track of what one is taking in."[48] Similarly, David Kurnick has discussed the quasi-mythic "grandeur" of "be[ing] a character in Eliot—intelligently, exhaustively attended to."[49] During an age of obsessive writing in Britain and continental Europe, in which copious authorial output, serialized publication, and compulsive reading became normative modes of producing and consuming fiction,[50] the texts I look at resist grandiose apprehensions.[51] Rather, they are marshaled around protagonists whose apprehensibility is coextensive with diminishment and shrinkage, and are told by narrators who exercise precarious, often fraught, holds over the minds they're assigned to interpret. Collectively, these narrators are gripped by hermeneutic hopelessness, agitation, or indifference: in the texts I examine, exhaustive interiorization is displaced by acts of forfeiture or stepping aside. "The Man of the Crowd," the Dupin tales, *Bartleby*, *The Confidence-Man*, *The Portrait of a Lady*, and *Passing* all elevate epistemophilic yearning over proficiency, fluency, and expertise: the unsatiated "craving to know" in "The Man of the

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[48] Niel Hertz, *George Eliot's Pulse*, (Stanford: SUP, 2003), 3.
[49] David Kurnick, "Abstraction and the Subject of Novel Reading: Drifting through *Romola*," *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction*, Vol. 42, No. 3 (Fall 2009), 490-496, 492.
[50] See Lennard J. Davis, "Never Done: Compulsive Writing, Graphomania, Bibliomania," *Obsession: A History*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 105-124.
[51] In this climate, major American writers were remarkably unsusceptible to the seductions of sequelization and character reprisals. There is perhaps no more succinct illustration of this discrepancy than the co-appearance, in the November 1853 edition of Putnam's Monthly, of the first installment of Melville's "Bartleby, the Scrivener: A Tale of Wall Street" and an article in praise of Dickens's fecundity, entitled "Characters in Bleak House." The stark juxtaposition of a teeming, riotous Dickensian universe and the spectrality of Bartleby, too "mild" a presence to be effectively (re)counted, underscores the restraint I discuss in this project.

Crowd," the lawyer's inability to discharge his narratorial duty to the reader in *Bartleby, the Scrivener*, the narrator's deferral to the "strange workings" of the protagonist's "spirit" in *The Portrait of a Lady*, Irene Redfield's distaste for reading Clare Kendry. Whereas realism is committed to rounding out and delving into fictional minds, this project explores a countervailing enthusiasm for what Walter Pater calls "crystal character,"[52] which Heather Love glosses as "character[s] without characteristics," to whom "nothing positive attaches," and who are "defined solely by…imperceptibility" and "not solid enough to be the object of antipathy or aggression."[53] The task of telling these characters subverts the "vast and presumptive claim of direct access to other minds"[54] on which novelistic realism is seen to rest, rejecting it in favor of more modest and scaled-down alternatives.

All of the texts I examine are interested, in discrepant ways, in what Kate Flint has called "'unsatisfactory reading'" : namely, "irritation and incomprehension" and "*non-pleasurable responses*." [55] Not only do the minds they represent provoke on the part of their narrators existential states that share a kinship with what Sianne Ngai calls "dysphoric affects" (frustration, bafflement, anxiety, tedium, etc.), but they could also be described as eliciting these affective states as part of the experience of reading them. While not directly analogous to the dynamic I explore in my project, Lauren Berlant's concept of "cruel optimism" designates the phenomenological zone I wish to address: that of the disappointed "optimism" that inheres in "all attachments," which cause "the subject [to lean] toward

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[52] See Walter Pater, "Diaphaneitè," *Strangeness and Beauty: An Anthology of Aesthetic Criticism, 1840-1910*, Eds. Eric Warner and Graham Hough, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 8-13.
[53] Heather Love, "Forced Exile: Walter Pater's Backward Modernism," *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2007), 53-71. 59-60. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text.
[54] Richard Freadman, *Eliot, James, and the Fictional Self: A Study in Character and Narration*, (Hong Kong: The Macmillan Press LTD, 1986), 25.
[55] Kate Flint, "What Can Reading Do?" *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction*, Spring 2012, 19-22, 20. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text.

promises contained within the present moment of the encounter with her object."[56] In other words, my dissertation explores processes of characterization that fail to gratify the reader's curiosity. Building on Leo Bersani's phenomenology of characterological "vague[ness]" in nineteenth-century realism, I examine unintelligibility as a function of withdrawal rather than "density":

> It is a curious fact that the central figures in many nineteenth-century novels are the vaguest or the most mystifying presences of the works in which they appear. It's not a question of their being psychologically richer—and therefore more difficult to enclose within critical definitions—than other characters. Rather, we could, in many cases, justifiably complain that these heroes and heroines are *less* interesting psychologically than the novelists' other characters, or that they have a kind of density dangerously close to unintelligibility.[57]

Per Bersani, inscrutability may arise from desire so excessive that it defies expression, or from passion so contained it is mute. Characters like captain Ahab, Kate Croy, and Charlotte Stant exemplify the former category, while quieter, more self-effacing counterparts like Fanny Price, Miles Coverdale, Milly Theale, and Maggie Verver exemplify the latter, practicing what Bersani calls an "ethics of stillness."

The protagonists I look at are made to withdraw not out of unspeakable desire or titanic reserve, but as a chastening of the impropriety, peril, and even prurience of realism's drive toward divulgence. Their vagueness, I want to argue, constitutes an indictment of or unease with novelistic realism's overweening scrutinies, which award patient readers with accessions to subjectivity. I trace a postscript to Romantic-era fictions—in which even extreme reticence (or "stillness") is taken as emblematic of deep interiority—that is no longer sanguine about the economy of depth, nor at ease with the ravenousness for it on the part of readers. From first-person narratives that relinquish the quest for interiority (even in anticipation of readers' grievances) to omniscient narrations that abstain from free indirect

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[56] Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 24.
[57] Leo Bersani, *A Future for Astyanax: Character and Desire in Literature*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969). 66. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text.

discourse (*The Confidence-Man*), or generate friction between interiority and the progression of plot (*The Portrait of a Lady*), I disclose a narrative tradition of glimpses, glances, and peeps that rebukes the relentless forward momentum and comprehensive gaze to which formal realism aspires.[58]

The novel's incursion into private and domestic spaces is often seen as a correlate to its exfoliation of characterological consciousness: in Watt's famously succinct formulation, "we get inside their minds as well as inside their houses."[59] At the same time, however, the novel is itself a structure, a home of sorts, which dedicates the majority of its square footage to the protagonist. Alex Woloch's magisterial study, *The One v. The Many*, has been pivotal to our understanding of how the novel distributes attention among its constitutive sites of consciousness: "almost every nineteenth-century novel is informed by the problematics of character-space: both in terms of the particular elaboration of a 'hero' or central protagonist and in the inflection of inevitable (and often numerous) secondary figures," he writes. These ancillary members of the diegetic universe, minor characters, excel at evanescence,

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[58] It will seem, perhaps, that a project like mine reifies the "novel" and/or "realism" in ways that are problematic and anachronistic. This may not be a shortcoming I can fully resolve here, but I do want to acknowledge that a project grounded in a distinction between the "novelistic" and the "para-novelistic" must confront this objection. While I by no means want to insist that the novel or "realism" (a twentieth-century category) is a uniform, monolithic category in the nineteenth century, there is a relatively collective (if not organized) effort toward greater verisimilitude in prose among British and French writers during this period, among them Dickens, Eliot, Trollope, Balzac, Flaubert, etc. Their American counterparts, as mentioned below, were simultaneously enthralled by the possibilities of sympathy as a means of nurturing a bourgeois conscience, notably Lydia Maria Child, Catherine Maria Sedgwick, Louisa May Alcott, Harriet Beecher Stowe.

[59] Foucauldian analyses of omniscience and free indirect discourse have charged these techniques with a panoptical surveillance that intrudes on and fails to respect the privacy of characters. See, for instance, Mark Seltzer, "*The Princess Casamassima*: Realism and the Fantasy of Surveillance," *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*. Vol. 35, Number 4 (March 1981), pp. 506-534; D.A. Miller, *The Novel and the Police*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988); and John Bender, *Imagining the Penitentiary: Fiction and the Architecture of Mind in Eighteenth-Century England*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987). On the other hand, there has been a surge of interest in how first-person narration expropriates or annuls characterological privacy. Eve Sedgwick, for example, concludes her stimulating meditation on Theory of Mind in the nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century novel by emphasizing how little Theory of Mind the narrator of Proust's *La Prisonnière* seems to have, since he is "so vastly less effective at sounding the depths of [Albertine's] mind than at jamming and preempting her every signal." She also points out that George Eliot's oeuvre—despite "the most scrupulous imaginable, all-but-religious respect for the privacy of the individual mind"— nevertheless fails to reliably differentiate Theory of Mind "from preempting, presuming, or even quite undoing [this privacy]." See Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *The Weather in Proust*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 155.

"capturing attention precisely as [they] depart."[60] While thorough and persuasive, Woloch's taxonomy of the ways in which the protagonist's centrality can be established doesn't fully account for centrality that is tenuous even in the absence of competition (within a parsimonious character field that leaves it more or less uncontested), centrality that is onerous or embarrassing for the figure who bears it, or centrality that is divorced from focalization. In this dissertation, I attend to the ways in which the protagonist's space is awkwardly or faintly inhabited *within* the *histoire*, rather than simply handed down by, and hammered out on, the plane of *discours*. While the characters that are the focus of this study are granted the kind of spatial allocation that Woloch identifies as indicative of the protagonist, they at the same time exhibit traits of minor characters, whose "strange significance…resides largely in the way that the character disappears, and in the tension of relief that results from this vanishing" (Woloch, 38).

Anne-Lise Francois' notion of "recessive action" provides another helpful framework with which to conceptualize the narrative antipathies exhibited by the protagonists I examine. In *Open Secrets: The Literature of Uncounted Experience*, Francois excavates within canonical nineteenth-century novels, poems, and dramas a register of experience that she designates "unclaimed" or "subjectively inappropriable," which "positivist conceptions of action" would "dismiss…as nonoccurrences, nonexperiences" (*OS*, 48). Like Francois' "figures of emptihandedness," who flee temptations to "'turn…to profit or good account'…their experience of the world, others, or themselves,"[61] the characters I look at present models of action and development that shade into (im)passivity and obliquity. The narrative arcs of "The Man of the Crowd," *Bartleby*, *The Confidence-Man*,

[60] Alex Woloch, *The One v. The Many: Minor Characters and the Space of the Protagonist in the Novel*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 38. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text.
[61] Anne-Lise Francois, *Open Secrets: The Literature of Uncounted Experience* (Stanford: SUP, 2008), 21. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text.

The Portrait of a Lady, and *Passing* all avoid the exhilarations of peripeteia or the gratifications of a tidy dénouement, resulting in stories that do not seem to have a "determinate"[62] or contingent relation to their main "actors."

What Andrea Henderson calls the "depth model of subjectivity"[63] remains the most influential paradigm for thinking about how (proto-)realist narratives in the long nineteenth century approached character depiction. In league with scholars such as Henderson and Nancy Yousef, my aim is to show that other versions of selfhood and intimacy competed during this period with depth and sympathy. Where Henderson discusses "fascinating ghostliness" and " lovable flatness" (Henderson, 10) and Yousef unearths intimacies that, despite falling short of mutual recognition, are accorded the dignity of "constitutive ethical orientations"[64] in Romantic-era texts (e.g. "interest, withdrawal, responsiveness, and abstention"), I look at deflective postures and gesticulations such as darting away, flinching back, turning aside, and taking leave.

The off-kilter centrality of these protagonists protests against the ways in which reading was justified and incentivized during the nineteenth century. In the United States, the years this dissertation covers are generally understood to have been dominated by a phenomenology of reading that was predominantly influenced by sentimental fictions that enkindled sympathy in readers, abiding by an "internal logic" which dictated "that, through the mediation of textualized sympathy, feelings and experiences can be communicated from one embodied subject to another."[65] The appeal of sympathy, and the role of novels in catering to and defining this increasingly popular taste, was linked to the continental

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[62] See Jay Clayton, *Romantic Vision and the Novel*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 13.
[63] Andrea K. Henderson, *Romantic Identities: Varieties of Subjectivity 1774-1830*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 164. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text.
[64] Nancy Yousef, *Romantic Intimacy*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013), 21.
[65] Glenn Hendler, *Public Sentiments: Structures of Feeling in Nineteenth-Century American Literature*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 9.

expansion of the body politic and to the explosion of a financial market that was increasingly large, abstract and, for growing numbers of its citizens, anonymous. Literature was harnessed as a means of transcending socio-economic, racial, and regional disparities, a hugely urgent task for an increasingly far-flung, diverse society slowly (and tardily) attempting to reckon with the sins of chattel slavery.[66] Scholars like Peter Coviello have revealed how nineteenth-century American literature promotes the "dream of an intimate nationality"[67] that "somehow t[ies] together its scattered citizenry" (Coviello, 130). Coviello, for example, argue that writers like Whitman endeavored "always to represent, to consecrate, and—at his most ambitious—actually to sponsor intimacies, affectionate ties, bonds with and among a world of people who are, to each other and to him, strangers" (Coviello, 130). Contra such focus on the ways in which literature was enlisted in overcoming the atomism of an ever-more-stridently capitalist, industrialized, and stratified society, I look at narratives that succumb to the futility of establishing ties or pursuing attachments. These narratives insist on neutered or foregone bonds, compelling us to widen the orbit of literature's instrumentalization in the service of fostering democracy and social justice.

1.4. Chapter Summaries

I explore the dynamics and questions outlined in the previous pages by focusing on withdrawal and impenetrability in "The Man of the Crowd," the Dupin trilogy, *Bartleby, the*

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[66] See Jane Tompkins, *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction, 1790-1860* (Oxford: OUP, 1986); Kristin Boudreau, *Sympathy in American Literature: American Sentiment from Jefferson to the Jameses* (Tallahassee: University Press of Florida, 2002); Elizabeth Barnes, *States of Sympathy: Seduction and Democracy in the American Novel*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997); *The Culture of Sentiment: Race, Gender, and Sentimentality in Nineteenth-Century America*, Ed. Shirley Samuels, (Oxford: OUP, 1992); see also Lynn Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights: A History*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2007), chapter 1 ("'Torrents of Emotion' : Reading Novels and Imagining Equality"), which persuasively links the rise of the novel of letters (*Clarissa*, in particular) to the establishment of a discourse of human rights.

[67] Peter Coviello, *Intimacy in America: Dreams of Affiliation in Antebellum Literature*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 9. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text.

Scrivener, *The Confidence-Man*, *The Portrait of a Lady*, and *Passing*. My first chapter argues that Edgar Allan Poe's "The Man of the Crowd" (1840) and his Dupin trilogy (1841-45) are in much closer dialogue with the form of the novel than scholars have yet acknowledged. I argue that Poe's ensemble of proto-detective tales deploys an allegorical critique of novel-reading and its purported pleasures, specifically those administered by the realist strategy of omniscience whereby the reader may "lose [his] mind in another." Whether disabled by the encounter with the Althusserian "bad subject," so pivotal to the rise of the novel—as in "The Man of the Crowd," whose narrator cannot read the "worst heart" of the mendicant he assiduously tracks—or "turned inside out," as it were—in the case of Dupin—to disable insight *into* the ostensible protagonist, these texts are animated by the limits and dangers of omniscient epistemology and the self-annulments of fictional absorption. Furthermore, Poe's "The Man of the Crowd" and Dupin trilogy remind readers of the ways in which the glyphic materiality of character never fully dissipates into the verisimilitude that had by the mid-nineteenth century become normative. At a time when readers felt fully at ease with the status of fictional persons,[68] Poe insists that every round, atypal character is as genetically proximate to type's horizontal geometry as is the more recognizably "flat" (stereo)type. This chapter thus attempts to redress a lack of critical accounting for the contemporaneity of detective fiction and the expansion of the eighteenth-century economy of literary character in response to what Lynch describes as "romantic faith in unsoundable depths."[69]

In chapter two, I further pursue the ways in which para-novelistic forms protested against verisimilitude and sympathy by reading Herman Melville's theory of "originals,"

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[68] See Catherine Gallagher, "The Rise of Fictionality," *The Novel: Volume 1*, Ed. Franco Moretti, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 336-363.

[69] See Deidre Shauna Lynch, *The Economy of Character: Novels, Market Culture, and the Business of Inner Meaning*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998). Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text using the abbreviation *EC*.

articulated in his last completed novel, *The Confidence-Man: His Masquerade*, as a system of characterization whose mimetic priorities betray weariness with verisimilar methods for representing persons. Originals, according to Melville, are exogenous to the "author's imagination," and the act of representation is a transgressive rather than creative deed. Two of Melville's earlier, shorter fictions, *Bartleby, the Scrivener: A Tale of Wall-Street* and "The Piazza," have been situated in relation to the category of the "original" defined in *The Confidence-Man*, but so far there has not been an extended triangulation of these three texts, whose periods of composition crucially intersect. This chapters asks, first, how ontological vitality emanates *from* character, rather than accrues *to* it; second, it considers the ethical and epistemological implications of such a kinetic centrality, which inheres in galvanizing that which surrounds it, rather than in focusing or monopolizing the reader's attention. Triangulating *Bartleby* and *The Confidence-Man* with "The Piazza" (the eponymous introduction to his only short story collection, *The Piazza Tales*), which Melville composed during a brief hiatus from *The Confidence-Man*, I argue that this intermediate tale offers a meditation on the spectrality and disconsolations of fictional character. As the century deferred to the power of realism to depict social tragedies, political and economic travesties, and "real-life" dramas, Melville took seriously the notion that "lifelike" fictions were themselves sites of ontological disconsolation that haunt author and reader alike. The texts I look at thus register deep, as-yet- unexcavated anxieties about the ways in which the overweening positivism of realist ontology eclipsed the endemic sadness of figment.

My third chapter addresses the realist novel itself by turning to one of the earliest exemplars of Jamesian psychological realism, *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881). I offer a three-part argument in support of the claim that plot has a skewed relationship to the protagonist in *The Portrait of a Lady*. Far from felicitously "placing" Isabel Archer through the mechanism

of plot, James constructs her subjectivity--her feeling, apperception, and psychological depth—*to the side of* narrative events. Furthermore, in this novel the exfoliations whose synthesis typically constitutes the effect of fictional consciousness produce a mind at odds with, or oddly aloof from, the events and relationships that are presumed to shape it. While James's contribution to the history of the novel has traditionally been construed in terms of his granular representations of individual persons and the lavish interiorization of what he calls "centers of consciousness," I argue in the following pages that a phenomenology of character who will have nothing to do with its narrative enhances our understanding not only of Isabel, *The Portrait of a Lady*, and the longer arc of James's career, but of the nineteenth-century novel more broadly and, especially, the arrangement of what Alex Woloch calls its "character-space." I begin by tracing a coherent topography of furtive and transitional spaces that has been largely neglected by secondary literature addressing spatial and architectural imagery in the novel. This topography, and Isabel's navigation of it, are, I argue, instrumental to a portrayal that is coextensive with retraction. I then offer an explanation of Isabel's elliptical relationship to plot, demonstrating that her dissociation from the novel's events, and from those who engineer her "fate," attenuates the prestige this convention typically enjoys as what Peter Brooks calls the "form of desire" that motivates the reader "forward, onward, through the text" (*RP*, 3). *The Portrait of a Lady* is propelled more by Isabel's *in*curiosity about and demurral from the episteme of the novel than with the satiation of her curiosity about the wider world, or about knowledge relevant to her circumstances, and this renders her development irreducible to *Bildung*, in which the processes of education or maturation correspond to narrative occurrences. Finally, I show that Isabel's meta-fictional attunements, and those of other characters on her behalf,

culminate in a disquieting ontology that haunts the novel, lending a certain prurience to its enterprise (to which the reader is inevitably accessory).

I conclude my dissertation by arguing that fictions of racial passing from the Harlem Renaissance literalize the anxieties surrounding penetrative (in)sight that concern me in my previous chapters. The strangely overlapping representation of the female protagonist(s) in Nella Larsen's *Passing* (1929) is not simply a twentieth-century renovation of the "tragic mulatta," as critics have tended to claim, but rather a departure from this model in terms of its commitment to rendering the equivocal visibility of the figure of passing. This novel, I argue, conceives of passing as an experience that, when it counts formatively, fails to produce a subjectivity whose perspective the narrative can represent otherwise than through impression. The figure of passing is thus a source of fascination and attraction, to which all eyes are drawn, while at the same time remaining unreadable. Despite being the novel's undisputed focal point, her centrality is incommensurate with focalization.

{Sub-Canonical Poe: The Tale as Counter-Novel in "The Man of the Crowd" and the Dupin Trilogy}

2.0. Prolegomena on Poe/try

In "The Poetic Principle," posthumously published in 1850, Poe excoriates the "mere *bulk*," "sustained effort," and "perseverance" of *The Columbiad* (1807), Joel Barlow's 12-volume encomium to the discovery of the New World: "a mountain, to be sure, by the mere sentiment of physical magnitude which it conveys, *does* impress us with a sense of the sublime—but no man is impressed after *this* fashion by the material grandeur of even 'The Columbiad.'" [70] Indeed, it is difficult to think of a more inveterate agitator on behalf of brevity and concision within nineteenth-century American letters than Poe: his three major treatises on aesthetics—in addition to "The Poetic Principle," these include "The Philosophy of Composition" (1846) and "The Rationale of Verse" (1848)—all extol the virtues of compositional moderation.

In an 1842 review of Hawthorne (whom he was favorably impressed by), Poe lambastes an extravagance that he ascribes to populist genres such as sentimentalism and sensationalism ("Rosa-Matilda effusions—gilt-edged paper all *couleur de rose*" and "cut-and-thrust blue-blazing melodramaticisms," respectively), as well as to their more sober, realist-leaning counterparts. The latter were particularly prone to run afoul of Poe's minimalist ideal, insofar as they indulged, to his mind, in "a nauseating surfeit of low miniature copying of low life, much in the manner, and with about half the merit, of the Dutch herrings and decayed cheeses of Van Tuyssel." he spares no disdain for the "Flemish fidelity that omits

[70] Edgar Allan Poe, "The Poetic Principle," *Critical Theory: The Major Documents*, Eds. Stuart Levine and Susan F. Levine, (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 178-199, 181.

nothing,"[71] insisting that the tale's economy confers greater formal integrity than the novel's comparative promiscuity: "in the whole composition there should be no word written, of which the tendency, direct or indirect, is not to the one pre-established design…[T]his is an end unattainable by the novel."[72] In this chapter, I argue that Poe's thinking about (and dalliance with) more protracted literary forms have understandably been obscured by his vocal partiality toward short forms—most notably, the tale, which he considered second-best to poetry (if still inferior), and his long-standing enthusiasm for magazine writing, which he saw as the vanguard of belletristic enterprise, declaring in 1836 that "in the end [magazine writing] will be the *most* influential of all the departments of letters."[73]

2.1 The Tale as Counter-Novel

"The Murders in the Rue Morgue," the first installment of Edgar Allan Poe's Dupin trilogy, begins with an epigraph from the seventeenth-century English polymath, Sir Thomas Browne: "What song the Syrens sang, or what name Achilles assumed when he hid himself among women, although puzzling questions, are not beyond *all* conjecture."[74] This quotation recalls L.C. Knights' famous 1933 essay, "How Many Children Had Lady Macbeth?," in which Knight denies the reader's entitlement to extra-textual hypothesis, condemning it as fanciful, naïve, and unbefitting the serious critic. In choosing to inaugurate his "tales of ratiocination" with this homage to the ways in which fictional worlds invite such specious curiosities by encouraging their readers to speculate on information about which

[71] Edgar Allan Poe, "Nathaniel Hawthorne," *Edgar Allan Poe: Essays and Reviews*, (New York: The Library of America, 1984), 568-577, 568.
[72] Ibid., 572.
[73] Edgar Allan Poe, "Magazine-Writing—Peter Snook," *The Works of Edgar Allan Poe, Vols. 9-10*, (New York: Hearst's International Library Co., 1914), 151-165, 151.
[74] Edgar Allan Poe, "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," *Complete Tales and Poems*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1975), 141-168, 141. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text using the abbreviation "MRM."

the text is reticent—melodies, pseudonyms, etc.—Poe suggests that the representation of analytic virtuosity and rationalist rigor for which the Dupin series is so renowned exists alongside a no less vital fascination with the stimulations of literary character and the worlds they inhabit. I argue in this chapter that "The Man of the Crowd" and the Dupin tales interrogate and contravene the sorts of curiosities and desires the nineteenth-century novel is renowned for eliciting in its readers. By attending more closely to the ways in which these late Poe tales function as counter-novels, we gain insight into the ways in which the novel's ontological, aesthetic, epistemological, and affective codes made character apprehensible to the reader in ways that gave rise to apprehension.

Scholarship has tended to dwell little, or with little specificity, on Poe's characters, with the possible exception of Roderick Usher and Arthur Gordon Pym. Per twentieth-century critic Leslie Fiedler, Poe himself, constantly beleaguered, was his own most enduring character: "[t]he figures [he] created in his work were never as satisfactory, unfortunately, as the figure he composed with his life" (Fiedler, 428). Indeed, the majority of Poe's creations tend to be relegated to the category of, as Garrett Stewart has put it, "isolated seething Nobodies."[75] Yet the anonymous narrator of "The Mystery of Marie Roget," the second story in the Dupin series, describes his motivation in recounting its predecessor ("The Murders in the Rue Morgue") in terms of the wish to "depict some very remarkable features in the mental character of my friend"—indeed, he insists that "this depicting of character constituted my design."[76] He claims to feel satisfied that the previous text had succeeded in this aim:

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[75] Garrett Stewart, *Novel Violence: A Narratography of Victorian Fiction*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 61.

[76] Edgar Allan Poe, "The Mystery of Marie Roget," *Complete Tales and Poems*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1975), 169-207, 170. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text using the abbreviation "MMR."

> [I]t did not occur to me that I should ever resume the subject…[T]his design was thoroughly fulfilled in the wild train of circumstances brought to instance Dupin's idiosyncrasy. I might have adduced other examples, but I would have proven no more. ("MMR," 170)

Thus, the Dupin tales, which are alone among Poe's fictions to reprise a character and therefore lend themselves to being read sequentially as a sort of novella, exhaust this character in the first part of the trilogy. Poe's treatment of his most novelistic character is purely extensive rather than intensive: he tracks him over time but does not deepen him psychologically. In fact, insofar as Dupin's psychology consists primarily in the ability to infer that of others, it is antithetical to depth.

Published one year prior to "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," "The Man of the Crowd" (1840) has long been considered a kind of prequel to the Dupin tales, at least since Walter Benjamin famously called it "an x-ray picture of a detective story" in a 1939 essay on Baudelaire.[77] While critics have been nearly unanimous in their verdict that, as Jeremy Cagle puts it, this tale "centers on the act of reading,"[78] its engagement with the history and generic codes of the novel has so far flown under the critical radar. By recuperating this engagement, I argue, "The Man of the Crowd" emerges as a response to misgivings attendant upon the novel's ascension over the course of what Garret Stewart has called the "realist century."[79] To borrow a felicitous formulation from Dierdre Lynch, I am concerned

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[77] See "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire" (*Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*. Trans. Harry Zohn. Ed. Hannah Arendt. 155-200). See also, Tom Gunning, "From Kaleidoscope to X-Ray: Urban Spectatorship, Poe, Benjamin, and Traffic in Souls (1913)," who calls "MoC" an "x-ray" (21); Mary Esteve, *The Aesthetics and Politics of the Crowd in American Literature*, who "counts [it] among Poe's detective stories" (42); Dana Brand, *The Spectator and the City in Nineteenth-Century American Literature*, who calls it an "embryo" that "led Poe to develop the genre of the detective story" (79); and Jeremy Cagle, "Reading Well: Transcendental Hermeneutics in Poe's 'The Man of the Crowd.'" who dubs it "the *ur*-detective story" (19).

[78] Jeremy Cagle, "Reading Well: Transcendental Hermeneutics in Poe's 'The Man of the Crowd,'" *The Edgar Allan Poe Review*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (Fall 2008), 17-35, 17.

[79] See Garrett Stewart, *Dear Reader: The Conscripted Audience in Nineteenth-Century British Fiction*, (Baltimore: JHU Press, 1996).

in this chapter with "the ambivalent way sub-canonical…literature contemplates literary kinds whose canonicity is more assured."[80]

While Edgar Allan Poe's generic virility is well-established, his fraught relationship to the form of the novel has gone relatively unremarked by critics. *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket*, published in 1838, was the only novel he ever finished, and its composition was beset by difficulty.[81] He began a second, *The Journal of Julius Rodman*, which he intended as a sort of sequel to *Pym*, in 1839. *The Journal* was serialized in Burton's Gentleman's Magazine for five months until Poe abruptly ceased work on it when he left his editorial position there in June 1840 after a fall-out with the principal editor. Almost immediately following these flirtations with the form of the novel, Poe turned to his ratiocinative experiments. While "The Man of the Crowd" was among the very few other publications that appeared under Poe's name in the same year that he abandoned *The Journal of Julius Rodman*, this bizarre little tale has not yet been considered in light of Poe's ambivalence toward the form and compass of the novel. Yet the chronological contiguity between Poe's foreshortened second novel and the startlingly un-Poe-like[82] tale that has come to be understood as a prequel to the ratiocinative triptych[83] seems significant.

To begin this project with "The Man of the Crowd" admittedly asks much of a minor, partially plagiarized[84] text that is dwarfed by the lengthier form with which I contend

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[80] Deidre Lynch, *Loving Literature*. (Chicago: UChicago Press, 2015), 229. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text.

[81] See Paul Collins, *Edgar Allan Poe: The Fever Called Living*, (Boston: New Harvest Icons Series, 2014), chapter 3.

[82] In its fascination with the insuperable discrete-ness of subjectivity, "The Man of the Crowd" cuts against the grain of most of Poe's tales, which are overwhelmingly driven by the unboundedness of subjectivity. In this text and the Dupin trilogy, his fetishization with lyric, oneiric, and porous consciousness is evacuated in favor of an investigation of the gulf between minds.

[83] "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," "The Mystery of Marie Roget," and "The Purloined Letter"

[84] Stephen Rachman discusses Poe's probable cribbing from Dickens's *Sketches by Boz*. See "'Es lässt sich nicht schreiben' : Plagiarism and 'The Man of the Crowd.'" *The American Face of Edgar Allan Poe*. Eds. Shawn Rosenheim and Stephen Rachman. Baltimore: JHU Press, 1995. 49-87. "The Man of the Crowd" also bears striking resemblances to Book VII of Wordsworth's "The Prelude."

that it wrestles. Garret Stewart has written of Poe's short stories that their "inward turn upon mood, upon subjectivity—especially in the grips of such stylistic overcompensation as we find in Poe" is a forerunner to the "modernist self-engrossment" that, per Lukacs, is "anathema to novelistic possibility" (*Novel Violence*, 87). Yet, I argue, these very elements in "The Man of the Crowd"—its eddies and solipsisms—marshal an allegory of the novel's demands on readers' time, energies, and vision. In this chapter, I extend previous treatments of the transcendental, (meta)analytical,[85] and (ir)rational reading in "The Man of the Crowd," carried out by scholars such as Jeremy Cagle, Paul Huhr, and Stephen Rachman, in order to accommodate the story's more covert but no less vibrant interest in novel-reading specifically. By reading "The Man of the Crowd" in relation to the nineteenth-century novel and its antecedents, I argue, we gain a better handle on aesthetic and ethical countercurrents that pushed against the hegemony of the novel even as the nineteenth century deferred to it. Such a link between novel-reading and Poe's tales of ratiocination has so far been neglected, since generic genealogies have tended to be traced between "The Man of the Crowd" and serial forms such as the *physiologie* and the (*roman-*)*feuilleton*, or between the Dupin tales and detective fiction—a form usually taken to be *sui generis*, for which the Dupin tales are almost unanimously accepted as the sole template.

I further argue in this chapter that these four tales from the 1840s serve as a site of convergence for the materialist and aesthetic questions that ground my larger inquiry into fictional character between the mid-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. "The Man of the Crowd," "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," "The Mystery of Marie Roget," and "The Purloined Letter," all host a slippage between two dimensions of reading: on the one hand,

[85] See Paul Huhr, "'The Creative and the Resolvent' : The Origins of Poe's Analytic Method," *Nineteenth-Century Realism*, Vol. 66, No. 4 (March 2012), 466-493. Hurh argues that "The Man of the Crowd" "dramatizes…the problem of analyzing analysis" (490).

the mechanical processing of letters into words, words into sentences, and sentences into paragraphs (in the detective tales, this processing is analogous to that by which the detective organizes a series of clues into a cogent solution); on the other, reading as an epistemophilic and quasi-erotic endeavor, as well as a potentially addictive one.[86] In each of these texts, Poe explores the confrontation between the material and aesthetic basis of fictional character—literally, the arrangement of glyphs on a page—and a phenomenology of reading as a form of (dead-end?) pursuit, which is especially pressing during this moment of transition from Romantic to realist conventions. While Poe's concern, in the tales of ratiocination, with the material basis of reading—type(setting), fonts, clusters of letters and punctuation on a page—has garnered remarkably little notice, Poe offers particularly fertile terrain for examining the junction of book history and the history of the novel. During the final third of Poe's short career, around the same time that he became fascinated by ciphers and cryptograms, he turned increasingly to characters who defy attempts at insight. In the man of the crowd and Dupin, we can discern an interest in the genealogy that binds the (il)legibility of type, as a graphic unit, and the readability of character, as a psychological and moral one.

In *How Novels Think*, Nancy Armstrong likens the face and body of character to its *étui*,[87] the external encasements by which fiction enables us to identify, follow alongside, and eventually identify *with* it:

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[86] It seems little coincidence that "The Man of the Crowd" begins in a coffeehouse, a setting that openly (if tacitly) coaxes a comparison between a (culturally sanctioned) narcotic, caffeine, and the act of reading.

[87] I borrow this term from Walter Benjamin, who uses it to express similarities between the ways in which customized casings and packaging (*étuis*) bear the traces of the objects they enclose, and those in which domestic spaces accumulate—fossil-like—the form of the individuals who inhabit them. See "The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire," in which he gives this he gives it an extended treatment: "Since the days of Louis-Philippe the bourgeoisie has endeavored to compensate itself for the inconsequential nature of private life in the big city. It seeks such compensation within its four walls. Even if a bourgeois is unable to give his earthly being permanence, it seems to be a matter of honor with him to preserve the traces of his articles and requisites of daily life in perpetuity. The bourgeoisie cheerfully takes the impression of a host of objects. For

> [W]e might think of the human body much as John Locke thought of the human mind: as a 'cabinet' or 'storehouse' emptied of all innate qualities and waiting to be furnished with information from the world. The evacuations of the body's intrinsic value raises the question of how and under what conditions such a body could accrue social and economic value…[S]o the body, in the fiction of Daniel Defoe and other eighteenth-century novelists, acquired social experience and converted those encounters with the world at large into self-restraint and good manners. The appearance and behavior of the body consequently came to serve as outward and visible signs of the knowledge acquired and judgment developed from first-hand experience. By midcentury, the same body conveyed the individual's capacity for sympathy as well.[88]

That Dupin lacks this envelope upon which the effects of experience manifest or seal themselves is not just emblematic of the "partial specifi[cation]" that is standard for all literary characters and which enriches, rather than impoverishes, our "apprehen[sion]" of them (Price, 56). To the contrary, the scrupulousness with which any description of Dupin's appearance is withheld is conspicuous, especially in light of Poe's enthusiasm for personal descriptions.[89] In fact, so seldom is Dupin given any qualification at all, somatic or otherwise, that the slightest description is jarring: that he speaks "in a cheerful and hearty tone" ("MRM," 164), for example, or "in a very low tone" ("MRM," 165), or "drawlingly" ("PL," 214) stand out against the prevalent pattern of following quotations with basic verbs ("said," "replied," "asked," "resumed," "continued," etc.).

Although Dupin is occasionally placed in some spatial context—such as when he and the narrator "sally forth into the streets of Paris after dark" ("MRM," 144)—the reader is denied the breadth of access that the analyst, as Poe tells us, enjoys vis-à-vis his adversaries in a game of whist:

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slippers and pocket-watches, thermometers and egg-cups, cutlery and umbrellas it tries to get covers and cases. It prefers velvet and plush covers which preserve the impression of every touch. For the Makart style, the style of the end of the Second Empire, a dwelling becomes a kind of casing. This style views it as a kind of case for a person and embeds him in it together with all his appurtenances, tending his traces as nature tends dead fauna embedded in granite" (46).

[88] Nancy Armstrong, *How Novels Think: The Limits of Individualism from 1719-1900*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 4.

[89] An iconic example of this predilection is his highly controversial and never published *Literati of New York*, in which Poe indulges his penchant for physical portraiture in prose, often causing dire offense.

> Our player confines himself not at all; nor, because the game is the object, does he reject deductions from things external to the game. He examines the countenance of his partner, comparing it carefully with that of each of his opponents. He considers the mode of assorting the cards in each hand; often counting trump by trump, and honor by honor, through the glances bestowed by their holders upon each. He notes every variation of face as the play progresses, gathering a fund of thought from the differences in the expression of certainty, of surprise, of triumph, or chagrin. From the manner of gathering up a trick he judges whether the person taking it, can make another in the suit. He recognizes what is played through feint, by the manner in which it is thrown upon the table. A casual or inadvertent word; the accidental dropping or turning of a card, with the accompanying anxiety or carelessness in regard to its concealment; the counting of the tricks, with the order of their arrangement; embarrassment, hesitation, eagerness, or trepidation—all afford, to his apparently intuitive perception, indications of the true state of affairs. ("MRM," 142-3)

The reader's "confine[ment]" with respect to Dupin is hardly insignificant. Dupin shares with the Parisian *portier*, who "by the 1840s…had become a standard presence" in apartment buildings in every arrondissement,[90] an "acute visual power."[91] Unlike the porter's female counterpart, who was herself "a prime object of urban observation" even as she "embodied the activity of observing,"[92] the male incarnation of this contemporary Parisian type enjoyed an "invisibility proper to the police."[93] Witness to all that took place within the apartment building, he was himself exempt from notice. Like this neutral observer who resists being typed himself, Poe's Dupin is a character whose defining characteristics make him an illegible blank. Hidden behind his green-lensed spectacles, he enjoys unobstructed vision, whereas no one can adequately perceive him. Like the police, he apprehends everything, even as he is beyond apprehension. The man of the crowd, on the other hand, is the Althusserian "bad subject" whose apprehension lies at the core of the novel. His insinuated criminality alludes to this figure of delinquency so pivotal to the rise of the novel, who "on

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[90] Sharon Marcus, *Apartment Stories: City and Home in Nineteenth-Century Paris and London* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 42. In the 1820s, Parisian apartment blocks began to be constructed with a porter's lodge.
[91] ibid, 47.
[92] Ibid, 43.
[93] Ibid, 47.

occasion provoke[s] the intervention of the army or police" (*How Novels Think*, 29). In the pages that follow I consider how "The Man of the Crowd" and the Dupin tales think about the subject's (narratorial and readerly) apprehension, in ways that might help us to better grasp the scale of novelistic apprehension and the sort of skepticisms it generated.

Poe's Dupin tales fetishize surface, quietly celebrating what is readily available to the perception of those who don't share the bumbling Parisian Prefect's unfortunate talent "*de nier ce qui est, et d'expliquer ce qui n'est pas*" ("MRM," 168). They are emblematic of the Cartesian-based "scopic regime" of modernity, which assigns prestige to sight above all other senses.[94] As Carlo Salazani puts it: "through its connection with observation, the detective story is related to the optical devices of modernity, especially photography and film…[T]he detective follows traces, and…, with…attention to details, brings to light what was hidden."[95] Thus, the Dupin tales, setting a standard that will be preserved by later detective fiction, promote what we might now think of as "surface reading," insofar as they reflect an investment in the "surface as literal meaning,"[96] revealing what was always present but obscured rather than a carefully concealed truth. Dupin disarms the presumption of depth by demonstrating that surfaces are sufficient, whereas the narrator of "The Man of the Crowd" (1840) discovers that depth is impenetrable and therefore collapses into surface. This story accords greater prestige to the frustrations of opaque exterior than to the epistemological payoffs of penetrating it.

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[94] See Jay, *Downcast Eyes*.

[95] Carlo Salazani, "The City as Crime Scene: Walter Benjamin and the Traces of the Detective," *New German Critique*, Vol. 34, No. 1 (Winter 2007), 165-187, 175.

[96] See Stephen Best and Sharon Marcus, "Surface Reading: An Introduction," *Representations*, Vol. 108, No. 1 (Fall 2009), 1-21. "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," "The Mystery of Marie Roget," and "The Purloined Letter" can all be successfully interpreted through strategies of surface reading: in the first, the murders *are* irrational, just as they appear to be, since the culprit is an animal; in the second, the murderer remains anonymous, thus preserving the mystery intact; in the third, the letter in question is, of course, always in plain sight

In guiding my discussion of "The Man of the Crowd" and his ratiocinative tales toward a rendezvous with the history of the novel, I build on the work of a few like-minded critics such as Lorri Nandrea, who has foregrounded the Dupin trilogy's pivotal distinction between "objectless curiosity" (aimless and undisciplined) and a "curiosity that is oriented toward an object or solution" (such as that exhibited by the detective). "Objectless curiosity," best exemplified by staring or gaping (at a crime scene, for instance), is "far more readily associated with the realm of the visual" and tends to "exceed or defy the interpretive function basic to reading narrative," whereas purposeful curiosity—one oriented toward a neat telos—"is easily mapped onto narrative, especially onto those plot structures that have come to define the norm of the novel" (Nandrea, 336). Nandrea places Dupin's curiosity, and the modes of reading that result from it, on the side of the novel's temporal priorities (development, crisis, dénouement), but the question remains: how does the narrator's curiosity in "The Man of the Crowd" relate to the novel? This breed of curiosity has a clear object without therefore accommodating resolution, or—more accurately—apprehension.

"The Man of the Crowd," as well as Poe's later Dupin tales, allegorize the experience of consuming more expository and verisimilar fictional forms. The narrator's anguished desistance from his day-long pursuit of the stranger is a reflection on the formal innovation most associated with the novel, over which Poe had enthused in an 1830s review of Robinson Crusoe: "the faculty of identification—that dominion exercised by volition over imagination which enables the mind to lose its own, in a fictitious, individuality."[97] The lament that concludes "The Man of the Crowd" suggests that this innovation solicited disquieting and non-salutary exertions from the reader: "the worst heart in the world is a grosser book than the Hortulus Animae, and perhaps it is but one of the great mercies of

[97] See Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe* (New York: Modern Library, 2001), 289.

god that *er laesst sich nicht lesen*." I argue that the detective tale may have something to tell us about the unease surrounding this shift from the type to the individual—an unease that is aesthetic and ethical as well as, or rather than, political.[98] "The Man of the Crowd" in particular charts the transition from "copying…men in general" to elaborating "original, discriminated individuals" (Lynch, 125) that occurred toward the end of the eighteenth century and is largely credited with ushering in the rise of the novel. The narrator's anguished desistance from his day-long pursuit of the stranger is a sober reflection on the formal innovation most associated with the novel: that of "great attention paid…to the particularization of character" (Watt, 369). His final lament—"the worst heart in the world is a grosser book than the *Hortulus Animae*, and perhaps it is but one of the great mercies of god that *er laesst sich nicht lesen*"—suggests that this innovation solicited disquieting and non-salutary exertions from the reader. The narrator's engrossment doesn't culminate in a satisfying conclusion, nor are his scrutiny and attention rewarded with deepened acquaintance.

2.2. Bad Hearts and Gross Books: Escaping Apprehension in "The Man of the Crowd"

If "The Man of the Crowd" is undeniably concerned with reading, it offers several different paradigms of this activity, each of which wanes into its successor, much like the twilight regression of daylight to darkness taking place outside the coffeehouse window. The first of these is that of "poring over" newspaper advertisements, which are spread across the

[98] See Monika Elbert, "'The Man of the Crowd' and the Man Outside the Crowd: Poe's Narrator and the Democratic Reader," *Modern Language Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 4 (Autumn 1991), 16-30. Elbert highlights the political valence of the story, arguing that it speaks to contemporary debates in Jackson-era America, between (Jacksonian) democrats, eager for collectivity and egalitarianism, and (conservative) whigs, nostalgic for an aristocratic past and a caste of secluded elites.

narrator's lap and whose claims on his attention are trivial and intermittent. This reading is interrupted at regular intervals to "observ[e] the promiscuous company in the room" or "[peer] through the smoky panes into the street" ("MoC," 475), and the narrator casually skims this commercial material, to which he feels no affective or intellectual attachment, amid the warmth and comfort of a London hotel. As he browses the classifieds, he puffs on a cigar and revels in a convalescent appreciation for "everything," including the underrated miracle of respiration: "merely to breathe was enjoyment" ("MoC," 475). The ads, which would have been cramped together on the page, printed in minuscule letters, and differentiated from one other only by a solid line and the capitalization of the first word of the next, may make exigent demands on the organ of the eye, but they make relatively few on the intelligence or emotions.

Soon, however, this purely mechanical reading is overtaken by a more avid cousin: as dusk falls, the population of the "principal thoroughfare" outside the window "momently increase[s]," until "by the time the lamps were well lighted, two dense and continuous tides of population were rushing past the door" ("MoC," 475). The narrator finds that this "tumultuous sea of human heads" floods him "with a delicious novelty of emotion," which serves to confiscate his attention from interior to exterior: he becomes "absorbed in contemplation of the scene without" ("MoC," 475). The precedent of perfunctory ad reading lingers in the "abstract and generalizing turn" that the narrator's attention first assumes: his initial proclivity toward thinking of the members of the crowd "in their aggregate relations" ("MoC," 475) is reminiscent of culling meaning from letters, words, sentences, and paragraphs. Presently, though, he "descend[s] to details," recording with "minute interest the innumerable varieties of figure, dress, air, gait, visage, and expression of countenance" ("MoC," 476).

This typological reading remains beholden to surfaces. Even as (a)vocations, traits, and propensities are inferred from external nuances of integument, posture, and gesture, the depths it sounds are fairly shallow: the narrator catalogues eighteen separate classes of pedestrians in the course of six paragraphs,[99] a number that exactly mirrors the number of paragraphs in which he recounts his adventure with the man of the crowd. His reading of "types" is inscribed within the contemporaneous (July Monarchy) "panoramic" genres of the *physiologie* and (*roman-*)*feuilleton*, which entered the generic ecology of Parisian publishing in the 1830s and reached the height of their popularity and production in the 1840s. The *physiologie*, which documented urban humanity with a quasi-encyclopedic vigor, enlisted the eighteenth-century pseudo-sciences of phrenology and physiognomy to furnish "leisurely" descriptions of types that "fit the style of the *flaneur*,"[100] whose sidewalk strolls brought him face to face with a kaleidoscopic range of city-dwellers. The *feuilletons* emerged on the heels of the September Laws, a round of legislation that made censorship more stringent and, according to Benjamin, edged "a team of able artists with a background in satire out of politics" and into the public sphere.

The *roman-feuilleton*, on the other hand, was launched in the late 1830s when two French magazines, *La Presse* and *Le Siecle*, found that the inclusion of serialized novels pushed their circulation to record numbers.[101] Although the literary merits of the *roman-*

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[99] upper-class citizens (calm and nervous types): noblemen, merchants, attorneys, tradesmen, stock-jobbers—"men of leisure and men actively engaged in affairs of their own—conducting business upon its own responsibility;" the "tribe of clerks" split into "two remarkable divisions" : "junior clerks of flash houses" and "upper clerks of staunch firms"; "the race of swell pick-pockets"; "gamblers," which include both "dandies" and "military men"; "Jew peddlers"; "professional street beggars"; "invalids"; "modest young girls"; "ruffians"; "women of the town," i.e. prostitutes, who range from beautiful young women, to "beldames" clinging to the dregs of youth, to adolescents still learning their trade; "drunkards"; "piemen"; "porters"; "coal-heavers"; "sweeps"; "organ-grinders"; "monkey-exhibitors"; "ballad-mongers."

[100] Walter Benjamin, "The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire," *The Writer of Modern Life: Essays on Charles Baudelaire*, (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006), 46-133, 68.

[101] Balzac's *La Vieille Fille* is widely considered to have been the first novel published in this manner, appearing in *Le Siecle* over the course of 12 installments in 1836.

feuilleton were fiercely contested, most authors eventually had material published in this format, which—as a general rule—catered to less sophisticated tastes and tended toward melodrama, sentimentalism, and sensational plots stitched together with shock-factor events and breath-bating cliffhangers. The format also seemed to lend itself to oral recitation, and its consumption was especially widespread among working class people who could not afford more expensive, bound volumes. Deriving etymologically from "*feuille*," or leaf, *feuilleton* refers to its material flimsiness, lightweightedness, and looseness, and the way in which the faces "[flit]" ("MoC," 478) past the narrator's window in "The Man of the Crowd," much like wind-tossed foliage (not for nothing, the tale takes place on a blustery "evening in autumn") further reinforce their kinship with this contemporaneous genre, which cultivated ritualized habits of consumption, if in small doses.

Panoramic reading soon gives way to a third paradigm: interpreting the man of the crowd, who proves "merci[fully]" unfathomable. Critical dismissals of the stranger as merely a "symptom of the narrator's psyche"[102] ignore the ways in which the stranger is introduced as an antidote to panoramic reading. His promissory depths lure the narrator away from types, requiring neither mere literacy nor a phrenological fluency. Whereas type-reading promotes compulsive consumption, in which the appetites it stimulates are quickly sated but soon require refreshed gratification, the man of the crowd promotes a passionate mode of reading—impelled by the "craving desire" to "know more of" a particular person—that imposes a regimen of vigilant, seemingly relentless attention. The stamina of this latter attention is a sharp counterpoint to the transient, quickly-compensated attentions of "panoramic" reading, yet it crescendos in interpretive enervation and bafflement. Indeed,

[102] See Jeffrey Weinstock, "The Crowd Within: Poe's Impossible Aloneness," *The Edgar Allan Poe Review*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (Fall 2006), 50-64 and Stephen Rachman, Es lässt sich nicht schreiben' : Plagiarism and 'The Man of the Crowd,'" *The American Face of Edgar Allan Poe*, Eds. Shawn Rosenheim and Stephen Rachman, (Baltimore: JHU Press, 1995), 49-87.

Poe explicitly pathologizes this sustained and psychologically motivated attention by having the narrator's fever spike as he chases after the stranger.

While the moment of the narrator's departure from the coffeehouse has been identified as the story's turning point,[103] the transition it signals has not yet been thought about in terms of the narrator's shift from a "panoramic" mode of reading to one that is more realist in its adherence to "doubtful delay" and "skeptical pause."[104] Caroline Levine argues that, during the 1850s, a certain strand of realism became synonymous with "the suspending of assumption and belief" (Levine, 3), and it is thus possible to situate Poe's "little stalking tale" ("Devotional Seeing," 656) within a realist ethos and epistemology via the convention of suspense. The ethics supported by this brand of realism is that of "respect for the startling otherness of the real" (Levine, 85), and it contends that the restraint of desires and suppositions is the healthiest "epistemological relationship between mind and world" (Levine, 6). Levine cites Poe's Dupin as exemplary of the principle of suspense: namely, that "to know the world one must acknowledge its inaccessibility to traditional rules and conventions—and its basic, unyielding otherness" (Levine, 87). If suspense dictates that preconceptions be held in abeyance, however, it ends when hypotheses are confirmed or invalidated through empirical testing.

"The Man of the Crowd" applies the question of suspense to the phenomenology of of reading character. The narrator dwells in the "anxious experience of suspense" and the "unrest of doubt" as he pursues the stranger through the labyrinth of darkened city streets.

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[103] See Rachman, "Reading Cities: Devotional Seeing in the Nineteenth Century," *American Literary History*, Vol. 9, No. 4 (Winter 1997), 653-675. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text.
[104] See Caroline Levine, *The Serious Pleasures of Suspense: Victorian Realism and Narrative Doubt*, (Charlottesville: UVA Press, 2003), 3. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text.

If suspense entails "serious pleasures" and is an ethically beneficial (if medial)[105] state—insofar as it opens up space for experiment to subvert error and bias—"The Man of the Crowd" withholds the very results that make suspense narratively worthwhile, as well as morally or politically significant. It represents "knowledge seeking" that ends in mortal fatigue and in an almost jubilant capitulation to the impossibility of knowing, generating a suspense that snaps just as it nears the climax from which it derives its power. In other words, suspense is only enjoyable in the anticipation of its alleviation. The absence of this relief siphons off suspense's ethical payoffs and compels us to question whether, as Levine says, it can be considered "the best approach to alterity."

"The Man of the Crowd" thus documents a dramatic affective shift with epistemological coefficients: from suave indifference that yields expertise to ungovernable obsession that ends in impotence and forfeiture. Detached, pro forma scanning is more successful and fulfilling than this ardent, even libidinal, mode of reading that is so voracious it must ultimately, for the narrator's own well-being, be discontinued. On the contrary, "The Man of the Crowd" ends suddenly with the suspension of the very suspense that has propelled it: "[i]t will be in vain to follow; for I shall learn no more of him, nor of his deeds," the narrator finally relents. Indeed, to forgo knowledge of the stranger, to assent to his inscrutability, constitutes "one of the great *mercies* of God" (emphasis mine). This odd turn of phrase suggests that to withstand the rapacious curiosity of the narrator, as it were, constitutes an act of compassion or clemency. It seems to transfer the burden of culpability from the criminal man of the crowd, whose delinquency has been taken for granted by

[105] It spans the gap "between liberating the mind," on the one hand and, on the other, "checking its unruly speculations against the evidence offered up by the alterity of the world" (Levine, 6)

critics.[106] The question of who perpetrates or is implicated in crime is far more ambivalent than the secondary literature allows, however. The story ends, after all, not with the positive indictment of the man of the crowd (as "the type and genius of deep crime," who "refuses to be alone") but with the negative intimation that the narrator—and by extension the reader—are guilty of desiring a private assignation with him.

The narrator's longing for the man of the crowd can be framed in terms of narrative strategies preferred by the novel. In other words, the narrator's desire is articulable in terms of identification and focalization—such as that which obtains, for example, between the author and first-person narrator in *Robinson Crusoe*. Another instance of such focalization is that which occurs when an omniscient narrator channels itself through the protagonist, or another diegetic consciousness, via psycho-narration or free indirect discourse.[107] The narrator of "The Man of the Crowd" seeks to arrogate the stranger's mind in a similar fashion, carried along by the "craving desire to know more" that is by critical consensus among the hallmark effects of the nineteenth-century novel. Rushing from the coffeehouse, he flees from a realm of well-lit, bourgeois solidity into the phantasmagoria of London's shadowy streetscape, where all is adumbral and flickering. In doing so, his posture modifies in response to his new reading content: stiffening from a desultory, haphazard, reclined position indicates not only a ratcheted-up desire but also greater precarity and risk.

One of the novel's key strategies for promoting readerly intimacy with the characters that populate its pages is by placing these characters in domestic settings. Benjamin was the

[106] The status of criminal, in the secondary literature on the text, is at most shared with the narrator, insofar as he may identify with him or be his doppelgänger.
[107] See Cohn, chapter 1.

first to point out that the street is the *flâneur*'s home,[108] and a number of critics have read the narrator of "The Man of the Crowd," as well as the stranger himself, as instantiations of the urban *flâneur*, as well as its less glamorous cousin, the *badaud* (gawker).[109] I would argue, however, that far from representing a home, the avenues and alleyways in Poe's story are sites of exemption from the traces by which the bourgeois interior accrues its value: the man of the crowd leaves no trace, never lingering long enough to sit, eat, sleep, converse. He leaves no imprint or residue; moreover, all the materials with which he comes into contact foreclose the possibility of traces: glass windows, brick walls, and stone pavements don't record marks or preserve indentations (barring the application of considerable pressure). Furthermore, the stranger's peripatetic wandering mimics another of the novel's strategies for fostering intimacy: that of following a "restless" or "misfit" protagonist as s/he forges an identity via transit through the world.[110] Unlike the novelistic protagonist, however, the gratuitous redundancy of the stranger's movements—which repeatedly take him and the narrator in circles, to no discernible end—avoids synthesis into the experiences (or, *Bildung*) that render subjectivity visible, sympathetic, and legible.

2.3. "*ce grand malheur, de ne pouvoir etre seul*" : Character's Blank Gaze in "The Man of the Crowd"

In his 1923 *Studies in Classic American Literature*, D.H. Lawrence rather cryptically claims that "[Poe's] best pieces…are not tales. They are more…[T]hey are 'love' stories."[111] Indeed, the amatory overtones of "The Man of the Crowd" pull in a variety of directions,

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[108] See Walter Benjamin, "Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century," *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, and Autobiographical Writings*, Ed. Peter Demetz. Trans. Edmund Jephcott, (New York: Schocken Books, 2007), 146-162.

[109] Baudelaire, in "The Painter of Modern Life," was the first to liken the man of crowd to the *flâneur*, a comparison to which Benjamin objected. Since then, however, numerous critics from Dana Brand to Tom Gunning have adopted it for themselves, either mentioning it in passing or making it a crux of their argument.

[110] See Watt, *The Rise of the Novel* and Moretti, *A Way in the World*.

[111] See D.H. Lawrence, *Studies in Classic American Literature*, (New York: Penguin Classics, 1990), chapter 6.

from the paraphilic to the homoerotic. I would argue, here, that one crucial amatory vector for the tale is allegorical, insofar as it concerns the reader's fondness for, and affective attachment to, literary character. That it does so at a moment when the word itself brought to mind letters on a page as readily as it did confected personalities in works of fantasy begs further examination, which I take up in this section and the one that follows.

The man of the crowd is the only figure who sustains the narrator's attention; the other figures capture it for a moment, each one's prominence soon usurped by the next product of the "press" (used interchangeably with "crowd" in the story). It is only for the stranger that the narrator feels the wish for vicariousness, identification, and penetration.[112] Whereas critics have cited the man of the crowd's failure to notice that he is being surveilled as evidence of his non-existence, none have linked the narrator's furtive pursuit of the stranger to the epistemological and affective devices of omniscience and sympathy that preside over the reader's encounter with character—in particular, the protagonist—in the nineteenth-century novel. That is, they haven't yet read the man of the crowd as a sort of latent protagonist, or a protagonist *in potentia*.

The narrator confides that "it required much caution on my part to keep up with [the stranger] within reach without attracting his observation," and he only manages to do so thanks to his "pair of caoutchouc overshoes," which allow him to "move about in perfect silence" ("MoC," 480). Paul Huhr has evocatively called this ability to sneak up on the man of the crowd without making a sound exemplary of "hiding while seeking."[113] I want to concentrate here on the story's final paragraph, in which the desperate narrator, who has hitherto been at great pains to conceal himself from his target, "stop[s] fully in front of the

[112] See Brooks, *Body Work*.
[113] Paul Hurh, "'The Creative and the Resolvent' : The Origins of Poe's Analytic Method," *Nineteenth-Century Realism*, Vol. 66, No. 4 (March 2012), 466-493, 490.

wanderer" and "gaze[s] at him steadfastly in the face." Despite the narrator's effort to make himself seen, the man of the crowd "noticed [him] not" ("MoC," 481). The narrator's invisibility to the stranger at this moment has prompted critics to interpret the stranger as a hallucination, illusion, or symptom confined to the mind of an unreliable narrator.[114] It might also be considered in terms of class hierarchies.[115] Tom Gunning, for his part, reads the stranger's blindness to the narrator as an indication of the latter's affinity with "the voyeuristic spectator of classical cinema, [who] possesses perceptual mastery of the scene, but is impotent to effect it." Gunning further argues that "this combination of apparent knowledge and actual impotence creates the classic scenario of paranoia, and of the cinematic thriller."[116]

I follow Gunning in attributing allegorical significance to this lack of acknowledgement, but I argue that it motions less toward twentieth-century film than toward the ontological absurdity of face-to-face encounter between narrator and character in fiction (or, between character and reader), whose discrepant degrees of being prohibit certain acts of mutual recognition. The various relationships—themselves ontologically ambiguous—that bind these entities (narrator, character, reader) are intrinsically oblique: that is, they are marked by co-option or vicarious participation, rather than direct communication or exchange. Like eighteenth-century French mannerist painting, the nineteenth-century novel portrays absorbed subjects whose gaze, or consciousness, is fully inscribed within the diegesis.[117] As a general rule, these subjects do not puncture the illusion of absorption to address the beholder (i.e. the omniscient narrator or reader)—who, as ideological critiques of

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[114] See Weinstock.
[115] I am grateful to Chris Nealon for pointing this out to me.
[116] Tom Gunning, "The Traffic in Souls…" *Wide Angle*. Vol. 19, No. 4 (October 1997), 25-61, 21. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text.
[117] See Michael Fried, *Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the Age of Diderot*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

the genre have shown, not only look on, but live alongside, with impunity. The character thus beckons by looking away; its interpellation inheres in its detachment or preoccupation. Caught up in a trance or reverie, the stranger exemplifies this quality of being indisposed, or wrapped up in one's business—one that, paradoxically, makes good (or pernicious) "company" of fictional character.[118]

The epigraph to "The Man of the Crowd"—"*ce grand malheur, de ne pouvoir être seul*"—is attributed to Jean de la Bruyère, an Enlightenment-era French moralist most remembered for *Les Caractères*, his 1688 disquisition on Theophrastan character and its contemporary applications. Poe's deliberate combination of the trope of solitude with the category of character has not yet, however, been examined closely, nor situated in relation to the structure of the nineteenth-century novel. As Alicia Christoff points out in her excellent recent analysis of Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'urbervilles*, "'Tess can't be alone…because she is a literary character—an inhabitant of a world that is 'a part of her own story.'"[119] Moreover, as Christoff explains, while Hardy's narrator assures the reader that Tess is not "'an existence, an experience, a passion, a structure of sensations to anybody but herself'"—that she is, in other words, a real person—the very elegance of this assertion belies its validity: "the long extension of the list of states of being…, in all of its symmetry and alliteration, marks the sentence as a composition. Another presence asserts its presence on the page even while declaring that Tess is utterly and existentially alone" (Christoff, 22). In a similar way, I want to suggest, Poe's interest in "the inability to be alone" in "The Man of the Crowd" might be said to constitute a meta-narrative engagement with the nature of fictive ontology: character's intrinsic state of accompaniment (narratorial and readerly) and

[118] See Wayne Booth, *The Company We Keep: An Ethics of Fiction*, (Berkeley: UC Press, 1988).
[119] See Alicia Christoff, "Alone with Tess," *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction*, Vol. 48, No. 1 (Spring 2015), 18-44, 21. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text.

its helpless vulnerability to regard. The narrator of "The Man of the Crowd" creeps up so stealthily behind the stranger that he recalls the merging of author and narrator-cum-protagonist mentioned earlier in regard to *Robinson Crusoe*.[120]

The threat that the stranger might discover he's being followed contributes as much to the story's suspense as does the narrator's mounting desire for knowledge about him. Indeed, in "The Man of the Crowd," the epistemological limbo that nurtures suspense falls as much within the domain of character as it does that of plot, since the two overlap to the point of becoming synonymous with one another: the quest to satiate curiosity about character constitutes the story's plot. At several moments the stranger swivels around, as if he suspects the narrator's presence, and although he never confronts the latter, the tale is steeped in the vague sense that he hovers at the edge of such an awareness. This simmering diegetic malaise lends Poe's little (anti-)narrative a certain meta-narrative wariness toward or disapproval of the narratorial monitoring that character is, on the one hand, too ontologically deficient to register but which, on the other, it can never evade.

2.4. Keeping in View but Knowing No More: "The Man of the Crowd" as Anti-Novel

"The Man of the Crowd" reverses the conventions of display cherished by the novel, charting the gradual attrition of optical proficiency rather than the steady expansion of insight. As mentioned earlier, the tale opens on its first-person narrator squeezed into the "bow-window" of a London coffeehouse, thus referencing a structural feature that

[120] The narrator's muffling footwear, which permits noiseless passage through the slick streets, subtly alludes to the craft of bookbinding, which had patented a method of caoutchouc binding several years earlier. The spine and covers of a book create a physical layer of removal between the reader and the textual world—one that further augments the ontological estrangement between the two. The binding, in other words, functions as a shelter for the book itself, not just the imaginary world it conjures up.

prefigures the Foucauldian panopticon to which the narrative devices of the novel will later be compared.[121] The narrator's semi-orbital vista and the multiple panes of glass from which, "brow pressed," he can peer onto the street outside, imply the ocularcentric architectures and ethos of nineteenth-century European capitals such as London, Paris, and Berlin; they also, however, point toward the surveillant methods of the novel itself and to its reliance on structural elements drawn predominantly from the visual arts: namely, perspective, scene, and point of view. In the grip of "one of those happy moods which are so precisely the converse of *ennui*…when the film from the mental vision departs" ("MoC," 475), the narrator starts out in a state of heightened ocular acuity that then diminishes over the course of his interaction with the man of the crowd.

The meticulousness and specificity with which the narrator describes the faces and garments of the people who file past the coffeehouse window infuses the first pages of "The Man of the Crowd" with something of the zeal and skill of the connoisseur. The first-person narrator catalogues the passers-by not (only) like a "botanist of the asphalt," as Benjamin would have it, but like a private collector curating artifacts for his *Wunderkammer* or vaunting the curios lining the shelves of his display cabinet. Able to "read, even in that brief interval of a glance, the history of long years" ("MoC," 478), no hemming or equivocation interfere with the narrator's expertise, which are underwritten by the authority of possession or imminent acquisition.

The narrator first catches sight of the stranger through a convex window composed of several consecutive casements. Having never before seen "any thing remotely resembling" the man of the crowd ("MoC," 478), he becomes "singularly aroused, startled, fascinated" and is compelled to chase him through a warren of thoroughfares and by-ways,

[121] See, for example, Miller, *The Novel and the Police*.

"firmly resolved that [they] should not part until [he] had satisfied [him]self in some measure respecting him" ("MoC," 480). Eventually, however, the narrator grows "wearied unto death" ("MoC," 481) and is obliged to abandon his pursuit with the admission that it has been in vain. If, as Gunning suggests, the detective's gaze is nourished by "the resistances it meets" (Gunning, 12), ultimately overcoming them, the narrator of "The Man of the Crowd" ends up being repelled by such resistances, unable to acquire the object he covets.

The whetting and undulation of attention animate "The Man of the Crowd." While it nowhere approaches the length or scope of a novel, this tale nevertheless serves as a synopsis of the shift from fiction dominated by didactic types to fiction devoted to atypal, interiorized characters whom the reader, so to speak, gets to know. Most crucially, it registers a certain anxiety over this shift, portraying the attention that such "novel" character demands from its narrator as an obsessive, maniacal, and perilous force—one ultimately only (safely) eligible for renunciation. "The Man of the Crowd" offers a meditation on the differential forms of attention levied and sponsored by various literary and cultural phenomena, from advertising ephemera to the eminently legible faces of the "throng" to the more extended—and ultimately rebarbative—fascinations of "absolute idiosyncrasy" ("MoC," 478). With impressive vigor and comprehensiveness given its small size, this tale reflects on the ways in which one sort of attention can disrupt or preclude another—as when the narrator "g[ives] up, at length, all care of things within the hotel" ("MoC," 475) by turning to the crowd outside, or when his leisurely perusal of types is interrupted by the appearance of "a countenance which at once arrested and absorbed [his] whole attention" ("MoC," 478). More to the point, this story imagines a correspondence between attention and knowledge that is non-reciprocal, whereas the novel tends to treat it as directly

proportional: in other words, the attention lavished on the protagonist tends to cash out in largely epistemological dividends.

2.5. Faces of Type: Surface and Depth in the Tale

Poe's aesthetic investments in paper, binding, and typography, and his abiding interest in the material surface of the text[122] as a vehicle for transparency have garnered less critical mention than they deserve. It strikes me as rather astonishing that his engagement with the diachronics of print technology in "The Man of the Crowd" has received so little notice from scholars, given that Poe wrote his little narrative at the tail end of four watershed decades in the evolution of industrial publishing.[123] Indeed, Poe's career began, with the publication of *Tamerlane and Other Poems* in 1827, during a crucial decade in the history of the interface between manuscript and print,[124] and in the course of his relatively short lifetime seismic shifts in production and circulation took place: manual printing was replaced by mechanized and steam-driven presses (unleashed from the complex logistics of moveable type), lithography became more diffuse, stereotyping became a more widespread (and substantially streamlined) alternative to standing type, typecasting became automated,

[122] It is an interest he entertained at least as early as 1836, in his review of Defoe: "The Edition of *Robinson Crusoe* now before us is worthy of all praise. We have seldom seen a more beautiful book. It is an octavo of 470 pages. The fifty wood cuts with which it is ornamented are, for the most part, admirable. We may instance, as particularly good, those on pages 6, 27, 39, 49, 87, 88, 92, 137, 146, 256, and 396. The design on the title page is superlative. In regard to the paper, typography, and binding of the work, that taste must be fastidious indeed which can find any fault with either."

[123] See, in particular, Frederick G. Kilgour, *The Evolution of the Book*, (Oxford: OUP, 1998), chapter 9.

[124] See Kevin J. Hayes, *Poe and the Printed Word*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), chapter 2 ("Poetry in Manuscript and Print").

industrial binding machines came into operation, and periodicals underwent an exponential increase of six hundred percent between 1825 and 1850.[125]

Poe was a champion of these innovations, as well as a devoted and adept—if often embattled—magazinist. He made innumerable contributions (surprisingly few of them hackwork) to a range of American periodicals, and in addition to his frequent byline,[126] he appeared on the masthead of a number of well-respected national magazines: between the fall of 1834 and December 1845, he served terms as editor for *The Southern Literary Messenger* in Richmond, *Burton's Gentleman's Magazine* (and its successor, *Graham's*) in Philadelphia, and *The Broadway Journal* in New York. The technical aspects of printed media, as well as the contiguous fields of typography, chirography, and cryptography[127], remained major fields of interest to Poe until his death in 1849. In texts such as the comic "X-ing a Paragrab" to the pseudo-scientific "A Chapter on Autography," he enlisted these disciplines to address the problem of character, to ask by what mechanisms and under what circumstances it is legible.[128]

A long-cherished ambition (which he never realized due to perennial insolvency) was

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125 See James Raven, "The Industrial Revolution of the Book," *The Cambridge Companion to the History of the Book*, Ed. Leslie Howsan, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014). See also Kenneth Silverman, *Edgar Allan Poe: Mournful and Never-Ending Remembrance*, (New York: Harper Perennial, 1991).

126 It must also be remembered that Poe often published anonymously, or under an alias.

127 See John T. Irwin, *American Hieroglyphics: The Symbol of the Egyptian Hieroglyphics in the American Renaissance*, (Baltimore: JHU Press, 1983) and *The Mystery to a Solution: Poe, Borges, and the Analytic Detective Story*, (Baltimore: JHU Press, 1996) and Shaun James Rosenheim, *The Cryptographic Imagination: Secret Writing from Edgar Allan Poe to the Internet*, (Baltimore: JHU Press, 1996) for detailed accounts of Poe's fascination with ciphers and the art of cryptography.

128 In "X-ing a Paragrab," a magazine editor, Mr. Touch-and-Go Bullet-Head, attempts to establish his publication, *The Tea-Pot*, in a rural outpost on the American prairies, only to discover that he has a competitor in John Smith's *Gazette*. The rivalry eventually leads to the theft of all the capital and lower-case o's from *The Tea-Pot*'s type foundry, which necessitates the publication of an article in which x's are used as substitutes. This story thus explores the kinship between typography and cryptography, showing the effects of exchanging one character for another. In "A Chapter on Autography," Poe analyzes the handwriting of a selection of *literati*, with the "three-fold" aim of "[i]n the first place, seriously to illustrate our position that the mental features are indicated (with certain exceptions) by the hand-writing ; secondly, to indulge in a little literary gossip ; and, thirdly, to furnish our readers with a more accurate and at the same time a more general collection of the autographs of our *literati* than is to be found elsewhere."

to found a magazine of his own, and at several intervals between the summer of 1840 and the winter of 1848, Poe drew up detailed prospectuses for the project. The anticipated title switched in 1843 from "Penn" to "Stylus"—thereby shedding what he considered its excessively "'local"'[129] flavor but conserving the pun on the instrumental basis of writing. In an 1841 letter to J.P. Kennedy, as part of sweeping efforts to drum up subscriptions and financial capital for his venture, he communicated how central look and texture were to his vision for the magazine:

> The work will be an octave of 96 pages. The paper will be excellent — far superior to that of the N. A. Review [the *North American Review*]. The type will be new (always new) clear and bold, with distinct face. The matter will be disposed in single column. The printing will be done upon a hand-press, in the best manner. There will be a broad margin. We shall have no engravings except occasional wood-cuts (by Adams) when demanded in obvious illustration of the text; and, when so required, they will be worked in with the type. The stitching will be done in the French style, permitting the book to lie fully open. Upon the cover, and throughout, the endeavour will be to preserve the greatest purity of taste, consistent with force and decision. The price will be $5.[130]

The lucidity and thickness of typeface, the tidiness of flush paragraphs, the spine sewn so as not to inhibit access to the page, the sturdy paper foundation: all of these factors maximize legibility (or, "the clarity of the individual letters") and readability (or, "how easily the characters work in concert[131]"), rendering the material surface sheer, or invisible. Type, "at once omnipresent and diaphanous" (Jacobs, 21), mediates between language and reader, delivering meaning: the "anatomy of letterforms" and "the abstract shapes of words…are

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[129] Silverman, Kenneth. *Edgar Allan Poe: Mournful and Never-Ending Remembrance*, (New York: Harper Perennial, 1991), 191. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text.
[130] Excerpted from a June 21, 1841 letter to John Pendleton Kennedy, reprinted online by the Edgar Allan Poe Society of Baltimore (www.eapoe.org) with permission from the Archives of the Peabody Institute of The Johns Hopkins University.
[131] Karrie Jacobs, "An Existential Guide to Type," *Texts on Type: Critical Writings on Typography*, Eds. Steven Heller and Philip B. Meggs, (New York: Allworth Press, 2001), pp. 21-32, 21.

superseded by their definitions" (Jacobs, 22). Paper provides the "material support" requisite "for the tale to make its impression—to exercise its absorbing effects."[132]

"The Man of the Crowd" and the Dupin tales share a keen interest in how the illusion of characterological depth and robustness is always haunted or doubled by the vestigial flat letter from which it arises, or on which it stands (and on which the reader's *under*standing is founded). "Flesh and blood" are smuggled into the reader's imagination via dry, uni-dimensional marks on the page—the "aggregate relations" of which enable the effect of character; but by the same token the "fleshed-out" character carries along within it an immanent ty/opography that is thoroughly planar, perpetually hovering on the brink of dissolving back into his paper-thin, soluble (ink-based) materiality. In "The Man of the Crowd," the very promise of depth is troubled by the suspicion of illicitness: indeed, the very emblems of the man's illegal activity are typographic tools.

While the man of the crowd is the only character in the story, aside from the narrator, to be fully embodied, his figural corporealization heavily alludes both to the "body" of the typographic letter from which it is literally composed, and to the substrate on which it is impressed. The stranger's gauntness evokes the thin letter, whose width is even less than a page (insofar as it does not seep through). Moreover, beneath his tattered rocquelaire, the narrator glimpses a "diamond" and a "dagger," which have been read almost exclusively as proof of the stranger's delinquency. They are also, however—and, I would argue, more relevantly—testaments to his symbolic, as opposed to referential, nature: he is *assembled* from characters, or symbols, as well as *being* a character in the sense of a psychological and moral corpus. Both diamond and dagger are typographic instruments: diamonds were common tips for engraving tools such as burins and échoppes, while the dagger, also known as an

[132] Kevin McLaughlin, *Paperwork: Fiction and Mass Mediacy in the Paper Age*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 34. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text.

obelisk, was a redactional utensil used to indicate obsolescence or extinction. The diamond and the dagger thus emblematize the hollowing out or removal that enables a character to emerge, both symbolically and denotatively. As an ensemble of printmaking techniques that includes etching,[133] intaglio produces a figure out of recessions: ink attaches to the gouged-out grooves of the matrix and is then pressed onto a receptive surface, often paper.

That the diamond and dagger twinkle out from beneath a "rent" ("MoC," 479) in the man's garments further reinforces not only their incisive function, but the way in which, over the course of the nineteenth century, the glyphic materiality of character fades surreptitiously into, or is cloaked by, the verisimilitude of mimetic personhood. Realism teaches us to think about flatness and roundness as antithetical characterological states, but Poe insists on their embeddedness—not in the Wolochian sense that a protagonist lurks in every minor character (given enough space and time), but that every round, atypal character is as genetically proximate to type's horizontal geometry as is the more recognizably "flat" (stereo)type. The rise of the novel worked to obscure this continuity between the rounded protagonist and the character as grapheme. If I may be slightly fanciful for a moment, the description of the man of the crowd also implicitly references paper, a medium whose brittleness—its tendency to tear, burn, rip, warp—is encoded not only by the man's physical frailty, but by his ragged clothing, which was literally the stuff of paper until the 1850s, when wood-pulp replaced scraps of fabric (usually linen) as the main ingredient in paper manufacturing.[134] As for the normative types against which the man of the crowd is set in "bolder relief" ("MoC," 478), the threat that wetness poses to their discreteness and coherence gently prods the reader to see them for a moment as literal units of ink: a sudden

[133] It is also worth noting here that the explicit reference to Retzsch, an early-nineteenth-century German draughtsman famous for his engraved illustrations of Goethe's *Faust* and several of Shakespeare's plays, also phonically echoes the English word for the technique on which his international reputation was founded: *etch*.
[134] See *The Cambridge Companion to the History of the Book*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

"change in weather had an odd effect upon the crowd," which is swiftly "overshadowed by a world of umbrellas" when it begins to rain. Moisture causes the crowd to "waver" and blend together ("MoC," 479) as if it were a page of fresh type.

2.6. Detective Fiction and Omniscience

Jacques Lacan, in his iconic psychoanalytic "Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter,'" delivered in 1956, evacuates Poe's tale of psychology. Rather than stable, coherent centers of consciousness, he argues, the narrative is animated by the "itinerary of the signifier,"[135] which dictates each character's position in the shifting triangulation of intersubjectivity around which it (re-)organizes itself at any given moment.[136] For Lacan, the purloined letter itself, "the pure signifier," fulfills the office of the Freudian "unconscious" :

> [its] displacement…determines the subjects in their acts, in their destiny, in their refusals, in their blindness, in their end and in their fate,…and…everything that might be considered the stuff of psychology, kit and caboodle, will follow the path of the signifier. (Lacan, 43-4)

Since Lacan, critics such as Bloch and Tzvetan Todorov have restored a degree of (post-post-)structuralist organization to detective fiction, for which Poe's trilogy is considered a template. In *The Poetics of Prose*, Tzvetan Todorov maps the "two stories" contained within the classic detective novel, or *roman à énigme*, onto the Formalist principles of *fabula* and *sjuzhet*: "[t]he first story, that of the crime, is finished before the second (and the book) starts," while "little" occurs in the second, that of the investigation: "[t]he characters…don't

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[135] Jacques Lacan, "Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter,'" *The Purloined Poe: Lacan, Derrida, and Psychoanalytic Reading*, Eds. John P. Muller and William J. Richardson, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), 28-54. 29.

[136] This is a triangulation of "glances" that affix alternately to the King and the Police, the Queen and the Minister, and the Minister and Dupin, respectively: the first "sees nothing," while the second "sees that the first sees nothing and deludes itself as to the secrecy of what it hides" and the third "sees that the first two glances leave what should be hidden exposed to whoever should seize it" (Lacan, 32).

act, they *learn*. Nothing can happen to them; the law of the genre is the immunity of the detective."[137] It is this idea of "immunity" that I take up in the remaining pages, where I want to suggest that this alienation from, or tenuous imbrication in, the narrative milieu is a reprieve from the ways in which novelistic protagonists are helplessly beholden to their plots.

In traditional narratives, *fabula* operates as the "*point d'appui* which makes the study of point of view possible."[138] It is, in other words, the inflexible chronology that, when observed from a certain vantage, offers the condition of possibility for *sjuzhet*. Inherently provincial, *sjuzhet* always implies the availability of alternative regards and varieties of transmission: "for the study of point of view to make any sense, there must be various contrasting ways of viewing and telling a given story, and this makes 'story' an invariant core,…which can be presented in any of various ways" (Culler, 28). In Poe's tales of ratiocination, however, *fabula* does not occasion perspectivalism; rather, the *sjuzhet* replaces sensibility with deduction and inference, with the effort to unveil a truth rather than fashion a subjectivity. While perspicacity and acuteness matter, detective fiction ultimately dispels "the criterion of total relevance" with which it initially seduces the reader: "[t]hough the detective story postulates a world in which everything might have a meaningful bearing on the solution of the crime, it concludes with an extensive repudiation of meanings that simply 'drop out.'"[139] Furthermore, the ratiocinative tales' *sjuzhets* only graze their *fabulas*. In the entire trilogy, Dupin implicates himself in the *fabula* only twice, both times through hazy references to a prior encounter with another character: Monsieur Le Bon, falsely accused of

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[137] Tzvetan Todorov, *La Poetique de la Prose*, (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1978). Translations mine.
[138] Jonathan Culler, "Fabula and Sjuzhet in the Analysis of Narrative: Some American Discussions," *Poetics Today*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (Spring, 1980), pp. 27-37. 28. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text.
[139] D.A. Miller, *The Novel and the Police*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 33. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text using the abbreviation *NP*.

the L'Espanaye murders, had once been gracious toward him, "'render[ing]..a service for which [he is] not ungrateful'" ("MRM," 153); and he had a skirmish with D— "at Vienna once," where the minister "did [him] an evil turn'" ("PL," 222).

Like the purloined letter, then, Dupin is in some sense "turned inside out, as a glove:" he peers into others, rather than constituting an other that the narrator and reader see through, or with whom they identify.[140] As a protagonist, he is himself empowered with omniscient capacities, and he is thereby distinguished from novelistic protagonists, who are represented as discrete subjectivities through the invasion of the very "privacy" being constructed. With Dupin, Poe thus offers a mode of apprehension extricated from body and mind, in which the protagonist is recognizable through a kind of receptivity that depends on his "immunity" from any entanglement in plot. Poe's Dupin trilogy picks up, then, where "The Man of the Crowd" left off, centering around a protagonist to whom all is transparency. Insofar as character designates "mind[s] and heart[s]" to which the reader is granted "intimate access,"[141] the Dupin tales have certainly not been interpreted as particularly interested in its intricacies. Toward the dénouement of "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," Dupin asks his companion, the anonymous narrator, "'What impression have I made upon your fancy?'" ("MRM," 161). This question—with which Dupin hopes to elicit the image he has generated in the latter's mind by placing several disparate attributes[142] "in combin[ation]"—triggers a shiver of disquietude (a "creeping of the flesh") in the narrator.

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[140] This notion of Dupin's inversion vis-à-vis omniscience is itself a sort of flipside to Barbara Johnson's reading of "The Purloined Letter," which implements paraphrase as a means of preserving the vacuity of the original letter: when the Prefect is asked if he has "'an accurate description of the letter,'" the narrative elides "the contents of [his] remarks, giving us only their form. And what is swallowed up in this ellipsis is no less than the contents of the letter itself." See Barbara Johnson, "The Frame of Reference: Poe, Lacan, Derrida," *The Purloined Poe: Lacan, Derrida, and Psychoanalytic Reading*, Eds. John P. Muller and William J. Richardson, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), 213-251, 216.

[141] J. Hillis Miller, *Ariadne's Thread: Story Lines*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 31.

[142] Namely, those of "an agility astounding, a strength superhuman, a ferocity brutal, a butchery without motive, a *grotesquerie* in horror absolutely alien from humanity, and a voice foreign in tone to the ears of men of many nations, and devoid of all distinct or intelligible syllabification" ('MRM," 161).

Indeed, what impression has Dupin ("I") made upon the (reader's) imagination? This reference to the physiological (goosebumps) in a text whose characters are radically, if not aggressively, incorporeal thus gets at the difficulty of envisioning or articulating Dupin, not only as a body but as a "referential personality" that imparts a "unique sense and abiding impression" (Woloch, 12). He who specializes in decipherment is himself beyond it. Although C. Auguste Dupin is the only of Poe's characters to be reprised—permitting "The Mystery of Marie Roget," "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," and "The Purloined Letter" to be read together as a sort of novella—his presence within these texts often announces itself through absence.

Not only does the reader of Poe's Dupin tales read *alongside* the protagonist (and, thus, literally in "para" fashion)[143] —a feature of detective fiction that has become ever more sophisticated as detective fiction has evolved—but Dupin's activity within all three texts is overwhelmingly restricted to the sidelines; indeed, in both "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" and "The Mystery of Marie Roget" it consists literally and almost exclusively of annotation. The first two texts in the Dupin trilogy are heavily citational, which is precisely what enables the reader to share in Dupin's intepretive labor. "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" is presented to the reader as a species of "commentary" ("MRM," 143), while "The Mystery of Marie Roget" is compared to an "extorted confession" ("MMR," 170). Both of these references—to the marginal and the extra-juridical,[144] respectively—anticipate the texts' preoccupation with what is peripheral, its tendency to absorb or integrate the extraneous so

[143] Critics have noted the competitive relationship that this engenders: the reader's vision is in competition with the detective's, and rather than there being a kind of synchronicity or absorption of vision—whereby the reader relinquishes or has 'her' vision subsumed by or made coextensive with that of the character—[s]he is on the lookout for the detail that matters, endeavoring to discern it prior to Dupin.

[144] See Paul De Man, "Excuses (Confessions)," *Allegories of Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke, and Proust*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 278-301, for a discussion of the "double epistemological perspective" of confession, which "is not a reparation in the realm of practical justice" (280).

that the *sjuzhet* itself becomes textually ex-centric.[145] "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" incorporates witness depositions—from the laundress, the gendarme, the restaurateur, the clerk, the confectioner, the tailor, and so on—while "The Mystery of Marie Roget" includes what the narrator calls "translations" (in practice, verbatim transcriptions) of newspaper articles. The inclusion of these testimonies and press clippings displaces or re-proportions the narrative representation of the investigation, turning it into a form of justified marginalia: what would be collateral jottings are convened within the "well policed" (Hillis Miller, 6) frame of the published text, with its neat lines of black ink surrounded by white bands of blank space. Poe writes affectionately of this border in "Marginalia" :

> In getting my books, I have been always solicitous of an ample margin; this not so much through any love of the thing in itself, however agreeable, as for the facility it affords me of pencilling suggested thoughts, agreements, and differences of opinion, or brief critical comments in general.

In the tales of ratiocination, the annotative markings—a "commentary on the propositions just advanced," or Dupin's notes to the narrator's notes on journalistic coverage— become the text proper, rather than supplements to it. They serve to efface, rather than designate, the boundary between print and script. But this boundary nevertheless impinges on the narratives, which register the tension between composition and presswork.

Dupin is restricted to the sidelines in another respect, as well. His discoveries are predicated on the meticulous analysis of "clews" and "traces," often undertaken in cozy domestic surroundings.[146] In order to read the detritus of events that, having already taken

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[145] It is worth remembering that the *sjuzhet* is itself the response to the *fabula*'s intrusion on the sanctuary of "perfect seclusion" that Dupin and the narrator cultivate. See Milette Shamir, *Inexpressible Privacy: The Interior Life of Antebellum American Literature*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), for a lucid and compelling account of transgressions of privacy, both architectural and psychological, in antebellum fictions.

[146] See Kenneth S. Calhoon, "The Detective and the Witch: Local Knowledge and the Aesthetic Prehistory of Detection," *Comparative Literature*. Vol. 47, No. 4 (Autumn 1995). 307-329, for a penetrating discussion of the centrality of the interior/exterior dialectic to detective fiction, in which the urban metropolis represents the nefarious, Dantean outside and the detective's apartment represents the secure inside: "the detective story theorizes the alienation of meaning in terms of the enmity of the middle-class interior toward immanence, an

place, belong to the hinterland of the text, Dupin must excuse himself from the text itself, and then import his findings. Commenting on the role of *sjuzhet* in detective fiction, Ernst Bloch states that it consists in the pursuit of "what is remote," attempting to "wrest from their pre-narrative, un-narrated state[147]" events for which the characters were not present and from which they are separated by a distance that is irreducible to the forms of proximity implied in the optical "point of view." In "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," Poe produces a "sketch…of what has been described in one portion of the testimony as 'dark bruises and deep indentations of finger nails,'…and in another…as a 'series of livid spots, evidently the impression of fingers'" ("MRM, 162) encircling Mlle. L'Espanaye's throat, then wraps it around a "billet of wood." He is thereby able to ascertain that the imprints are "the mark of no human hand" (Poe 162). Similarly, a "greasy" scrap of ribbon twisted in a manner "peculiar to the Maltese" ("MRM," 163) leads him to conclude that a French sailor with a long ponytail owns the East Indian Ourang-Outang responsible for the deaths of Mme. and Mlle. L'Espanaye. In "The Mystery of Marie Roget," the "highly artificial arrangement of…a white petticoat;…a silk scarf;…a parasol, gloves, and a pocket-handkerchief bearing the name 'Marie Roget'" ("MMR," 198-9) in a thicket indicate to him that they were strewn there posthumously and therefore disprove the allegation of "gang" involvement in the murder ("MMR," 200). In "The Purloined Letter," it is the way in which a "solitary letter…much soiled and crumpled" and "addressed, in a diminutive female hand, to…the minister, himself" is crudely stuffed into the "uppermost divisions" of a "trumpery filigree

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immanence which the detective threatens to restore by reading disembodied signs (clues)" (308). See also Carlo Salazani, "The City as Crime Scene: Walter Benjamin and the Traces of the Detective," *New German Critique*, Vol. 34, No. 1 (Winter 2007), 165-187.

147 Ernst Bloch, "A Philosophical View of the Detective Novel," *Literary Essays*, (Stanford: SUP, 1998), 209-227, 213.

card-rack of pasteboard, that hung dangling by a dirty blue ribbon, from a little brass knob" that tips Dupin off to the its true provenance ("PL," 220).

At the end of "The Purloined Letter," in collaboration with a co-conspirator, Dupin manages to covertly snatch the letter from the minister's apartments and deposit a decoy in its place. This "*fac-simile*" has been "carefully" inscribed with a citation taken from a tragedy by the eighteenth-century French dramatist, Crébillon Père. "'I confess…that I should like very well to know the precise character of his thoughts when…he is reduced to opening the letter that I left for him in the card rack,'" Dupin confides to the narrator. Incredulous, the narrator asks him if he has "put anything particular in" the missive, to which Dupin responds with surprise: "'[w]hy—it did not seem altogether right to leave the interior blank—that would have been insulting.'" Upon crumbling the seal, improvised out of bread, the minister—"'well-acquainted with [Dupin's] MS'"—will of course think immediately of Dupin, against whom he once committed some unnamed infraction. Pen strokes, literal indentations on the tissue of the page,[148] will thus produce for the minister the mental image of Dupin—the very image that the reader, as discussed earlier, has been denied.

In Dupin's final gesture, both citation and signature are problematized. Whereas citation is a means of conveying information from a source verbatim, by "copying" from a third party words intended as proof of his own unique identity, Dupin gently distantiates himself from that identity; moreover, in the story's published version, his "MS" comes to us well-kerned, stripped of all flourishes that might verify it as his. Because the reader has access only to a printed version of Dupin's handwritten note, it is legible to the reader with respect to content, but evacuated of style. Thus, it eclipses the thing it is meant to illuminate

[148] "A stroke is an uninterrupted trace of an implement on the writing plane. The stroke begins with the *imprint* of an implement." See Gerrit Noordzij, *The Stroke: theory of writing*, Trans. Peter Enneson, (London: Hyphen Press, 2009), 20.

(Dupin): both the Crébillon quotation and the ensemble of pen strokes through which Dupin copies it withdraw from the reader the "clew" they are meant to impart.

Like the man of the crowd, Poe underscores Dupin's susceptibility to conflation with his own materiality: at the very end of the trilogy he is purloined by, or collapses into, the typographic letter. Dupin has risked nothing less than his life in performing this favor on behalf of the Queen, for, as he tells the narrator, "'D—…is a desperate man and a man of nerve'" who would not have hesitated to kill him had Dupin dared to "'seize [the letter] openly'" ("PL," 221). He has accepted this risk because his "political prepossessions" make him a "partisan of the lady concerned" ("PL," 222)—but Dupin also has something personal at stake, a score of his own to settle. His inscription, "copied into the middle of the blank sheet," is thus a just act of sportsmanship that is, oddly, the only *un*justified text in the trilogy:

'—Un dessein si funeste,

S'il n'est digne d'Atrée, il est digne de Thyeste.'

The following line, the last in the trilogy and Dupin's final words, so to speak, are flush left: a literal aside attributing the quote to Crébillon's *Atrée*. At the very moment when Dupin embroils himself in the plot—by acting at the behest of political allegiances, by communicating directly with D—, and by showing himself susceptible to a (venial) taste for reprisal—we are most urgently reminded that he also, perhaps more than anything, counts as a mark, a letter on the page. Paradoxically, it is in the very instant that Dupin is constituted by the letter in its dual sense (both as the unit of correspondence and as the ensemble of alphabetical units that comprise it) that he receives the most robust fleshing out, and becomes most unmistakably a character.

{"Shadows are as Things" : Wistful Worlding in Early Melville}

3.1. The Melancholia of Fiction

If Poe was concerned about the arduousness of novel-reading in the early 1840s, by the mid-1850s Herman Melville was thinking seriously about the melancholia of form. A quarter century before his compatriot, Henry James, would write the novel that, another half-century later, prompted the latter's famous declaration that "the house of fiction has not one window but a million,"[149] Herman Melville was deeply skeptical of fiction's vantages. His last completed novel, *The Confidence-Man: His Masquerade* (1857)—a zany Chaucerian critique of mid-nineteenth-century American society set aboard a Mississippi steamboat—ends with the tantalizing promise of a sequel that was ultimately left unfulfilled. Indeed, for the remaining three decades of his career, Melville turned exclusively to poetry,[150] a volte-face with which scholars have struggled to fully reckon. While he has traditionally been viewed as primarily a fiction writer who for thirty years wrote mediocre verse, exciting new criticism has proposed the opposite: that it in fact makes better sense to think of him above all as a poet who for a few years dabbled in narrative prose.[151] Without accounting for the totality of Melville's fictional corpus, I suggest in this chapter a third way of assessing this decade-long engagement with fiction: neither as Melville's only true professional calling, nor as a dilettantish side-show, but as the ante-chamber to its own inevitable abandonment—a foredoomed effort to linger within a formal framework of whose depletion and inadequacy he was always, if ruefully, assured. This third alternative allows us to attend more effectively

[149] See Henry James, "Preface to *The Portrait of a Lady*," *The Art of the Novel*, (London: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1962). Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text using the abbreviation *AN*.
[150] With the exception of *Billy Budd Sailor*, a prose manuscript that Melville left among the many "fragments" in his desk upon his death and which was posthumously published in 1924.
[151] See, for example, William C. Spengemann, "Melville the Poet," *American Literary History*, Vol. 11, No. 4, 569-609.

to, if not comprehensively theorize, some of the affective and narratological dimensions of "early" Melville. The first of these, I argue, is the disconsolate ontology of fiction, which opens onto the vertiginousness of "originals," the imposition of the novel as a form, and the comparative suppleness of alternative media such as rhythm, verse, and stone.

Focusing my analysis on three of Melville's later narratives, *Bartleby, the Scrivener: A Tale of Wall-Street* (1853), "The Piazza" (1856), and *The Confidence-Man: His Masquerade* (1857), I argue that the pensiveness of *Bartleby* and the antic zeal of *The Confidence-Man* are bound by a poetics of fatigue akin to that which obtains in the case of Poe's exhausting and exhausted characters, who must be read aposiopetically or along the margins. In Melville's narratives, the protagonists' centrality inheres not in monopolizing or dominating the reader's attention, but rather in galvanizing that which surrounds them, thus registering the unsettled, and unsettling, nature of fictional worlds. In *The Confidence-Man*, the narrator lays out a theory of "originals" in a trio of chapters (14, 33, and 44) that depart from the diegetic world of the novel to meditate on the literary apparatus of the novel, homing in on the shortcomings of realist aesthetics. Originals themselves, according to Melville, are exogenous to the "author's imagination," and thus the act of representing them—rather than being generative—constitutes a form of disruption: as Branka Arsic has evocatively put it, "[originals] are already there, living their strange lives." Moreover, originals perturb the diegetic worlds they enter: Melville likens them to a "revolving Drummond Light, raying away from itself all round," to which "everything starts up." The original leaves nothing unmarked, "shed[ding]…its characteristic on its surroundings," rather than being "confined to itself" (*C-M*, 237).

But how could a figure evacuated of the "personal" leave such traces? While Arsic writes of Melville's originals that they are "formless life, impersonal atmosphere, figures

without form" (Arsic, 7), I argue in this chapter that they are defined less by shapelessness or vaporousness, than by a rhythmic morphology: even as they are vacuous as psychological content, Bartleby and the confidence man are legible as stillness and frenzy.[152] The former's inertia and the latter's frenetic changes of guise initially look like polarized velocities: indeed, when contrasted to one another, the charlatan's liveliness and the clerk's lethargy become even starker. When framed in terms of the prioritized place that both are assigned within their respective stories, however, the exaggeration of their "opposite" speeds results in a kindred antagonism toward the traditionally even keel at which a protagonist generally progresses through the nineteenth-century novel. Either too sluggish or too erratic to advance (unless a kind of stutter[153] counts), it is impossible to satisfactorily read Bartleby or the confidence-man through the conventions of *Bildung* or interiorization. Rather, they are composed as subjects through the process of composing, or exerting a kind of choreographic influence on, their environments. Their viability as protagonists depends not on the centripetal force their own momentum accumulates within the narrative, but rather on the momentum they elicit from their satellites. Their narrative centrality, in other words, is ex-centric and unsettling.

Situating *The Confidence-Man* and *Bartleby, the Scrivener* in relation to the category of the original, this chapter asks what it means for character to produce within its text "an effect akin to that which genesis attends upon the beginning of things" : in other words, how does ontological vitality emanate *from* character, rather than accrue *to* it? In exploring this

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[152] Doing so may sketch out something like the obverse of Arsic's claim about the meteorological or atmospheric valence of originals—that Bartleby is a cloud—insofar as *time* and *weather* have an etymological affinity in all Romance languages, in which both words share the same nominal form: *temps/tempo/tiempo/vreme*.
[153] Agamben argues that Bartleby's phrase chases after its own (prepositional) tail: "I would prefer not to prefer not to prefer not to" etc., implicitly comparing the Deleuzian Formula to a kind of stammer (see Agamben, Giorgio. *Potentialities: Collected Essays in Philosophy*. "Bartleby, or On Contingency." Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999. 253-259).

question, I draw connections, however tentative or partial, between the affects of fictive ontology and the narrative poetics of "originals," who inhere in diffusion, rather than compelling regard on the basis of individual attributes that add up to something like a unified self. In chapter 14, the narrator wonders why readers "expect to run and read" characters, who "flit along the page like shadows along a wall" (*C-M*, 75), and claims that "fiction, where every character can, by reason of its consistency, be comprehended at a glance, either exhibits but sections of character, making them appear for wholes, or else is very untrue to reality" (*C-M*, 75). In revealing and (di)splaying imaginary minds, the narrator contends, fiction "cherish[es]" the misguided aim of "infallibly discovering the heart of man" (*C-M*, 77) that it would be better served by relinquishing. Hearkening to the "classificatory conundrums"[154] that greeted the discovery of the platypus at the turn of the nineteenth century, he suggests that literature should take its cue from zoology in acknowledging the naturalness or realism of befuddling characters:

> When the duck-billed beaver of Australia was first brought stuffed to England, the naturalists, appealing to their classifications, maintained that there was, in reality, no such creature; the bill in the specimen must needs be, in some way, artificially stuck on. But let nature…produce her duck-billed beavers as she may, lesser authors, some may hold, have no business to be perplexing readers with duck-billed characters. Always, they should represent human nature not in obscurity, but in transparency. (*C-M*, 76).

The folly of attributing the platypus to a feat of taxidermy has been proven, but realist fiction has yet to assign the proper esteem to, or to adequately accommodate, that which avoids penetration : the "duck-billed" original.

In *The Confidence-Man*', the narrator rebukes the "pay[ing]" conventions that Melville lamented in his famous "dollars damn me" letter to Hawthorne, penned in 1851 in the midst

[154] Harriet Ritvo, *The Platypus and the Mermaid: and other figments of the classifying imagination*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 7.

of work on his "'Whale,'" in which he grimly likened himself to an "old nutmeg-grater,"[155] gradually worn down by the arils of commercial writing. In the second part of his later novel's theoretical triptych, the narrator ponders popular tastes in imaginative literature:

> Strange, that in a work of amusement,…fidelity to real life should be exacted by any one who, by taking up such a work, sufficiently shows that he is not unwilling to drop real life, and turn, for a time, to something different. Yes, it is, indeed, strange that anyone should clamor for the thing he is weary of; that anyone, who, for any cause, finds real life dull, should yet demand from him who is to divert his attention from it, that he should be true to that dullness. (*C-M*, 186)

Curiously, the narrator takes issue here with realism itself, rather than concede that realism caters to certain tastes and desires, whereas other genres feed alternative appetites. Indeed, he indicts the tastes themselves for being inimical to the very essence of fiction. Implicitly, then, he denigrates or undermines the types of imaginative and moral expansion to which mimetic fiction has traditionally been thought to minister, among them sympathy, identification, and vicariousness. It suggests that in expecting novels to restore—often in all its minutiae and mundanity—the empirical world on whose very suspension they rely, readers deprive themselves of other, more compelling—if also more somber and unsettling—experiences, such as longing, sorrow, and the sensation that one is a prurient trespasser.

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Melville composed the title story for *The Piazza Tales*—his sole collection of short fictions and novellas, which included "Bartleby, the Scrivener"—in February 1856, the same year in which the volume was published.[156] In shifting his focus to "The Piazza," Melville interrupted his work on *The Confidence-Man*, his last completed novel, which he finished in May of that year, and which was published the following April. The implications of this

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[155] See See *The Writings of Herman Melville: Correspondence* (Northwestern-Newberry Edition). Ed. Lynn Horth, (Chicago: Northwestern University Press and The Newberry Library, 1993).

[156] See Merton M. Sealts, "The Publication of Melville's *Piazza Tales*." *Modern Language Notes*, Vol. 59, No. 1 (January 1944), 56-59.

coincidence have not, however, received much notice from scholars, who have tended to focus on how "The Piazza" liaises or coordinates the pieces it accompanies.[157] Yet, insofar as it was conceived as a sort of preface to *Bartleby, the Scrivener*[158] and functioned as an intermezzo to *The Confidence-Man*, I wish to turn to it by way of justifying my decision to pair these two longer texts, which may otherwise be construed as arbitrary.[159]

Given that "The Piazza" distracted Melville from *The Confidence-Man*, it seems apt to read it first and foremost as a reflection on the protocols of consuming and producing fiction. If "The Piazza" is literally a tale about the open-air loggia that the narrator adjoins to the "old-fashioned farmhouse" ("P," 205) he has purchased in the New England countryside,[160] it is also about the metaphysics of this architectural appendage: the ways in which it contemplates "prospect and perspective," per Marvin Fisher, and "interiority and exteriority," per Arsic. It is also, I argue here, concerned with the affordances[161] of this bit of carpentry, the advantages and opportunities it makes available.

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157 Thus it has been described as a "frame of reference" that "enact[s], on a minor scale, a quest into the heart of the American experience" by interrogating the "ideology of the sublime" (Klaus Poenicke, "A View from the Piazza: Herman Melville and the Legacy of the European Sublime," *Comparative Literature Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 3 (1967), 267-281, 267); as "the key to unlock[ing] the three dominant themes of the book," namely the "difficulty of perception," "the dangers of isolation," and "human servitude" (Scott Donaldson, "The Dark Truth of 'The Piazza Tales,'" *PMLA*, Vol. 85, No. 5 (October 1970), 1082-1086. 1082); as "introduc[ing] the themes and techniques of five previously published stories," in particular those of "prospect and perspective" (Marvin Fisher, "Prospect and Perspective in Melville's 'Piazza,'" *Criticism*, Vol. 16, No. 3 (Summer 1974), 203-216); and as "a parable of the problem that haunts and guides all the other stories: the parable of building, thinking, and writing various spaces of interiority and exteriority, a parable that establishes the whole logic of their relations" (Branka Arsic, *Passive Constituions, or 7 ½ Times Bartleby*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 2). Arsic excavates the ways in which the "The Piazza" serves as a preamble to "Bartleby" in particular, making a persuasive case for reading Marianna's cottage as a version of Plato's cave—albeit one in which the problem of access pertains not to "essences" but to "bodies."

158 Having written "The Piazza," Melville informed his publishers that the projected order of the subsequent stories should be amended to ensure that *Bartleby* directly followed it.

159 This is not to suggest that I am alone in pairing them, which is certainly not the case. Sianne Ngai has suggested these texts' natural affinity, writing "*The Confidence-Man* is most evidently *Bartleby* writ large in its reliance on a multitude of barely distinguishable characters" (*UF*, 52).

160 "The Piazza" is in this sense autobiographical, as Melville made just such a renovation to Arrowhead, the Pittsfield, Massachusetts farmhouse he occupied from 1850-63, his most productive years as a writer (see Parker's biography).

161 It seems worth mentioning, even if Melville himself would not have been calling on the relation, that the narrator can only "afford" to affix this addition along the north side of his house. A concept that originated in cognitive science and has since been taken up most visibly within design theory but has also been imported by

"The Piazza" is energized by intercalated vistas that perpetually destabilize point-of-view. The capriciousness of all objects vis-à-vis perspective is metaphorized by the "hide-and-seek" of "certain ranges," which

> here and there double-filed, as in platoons, so shoulder and follow up upon one another, with their irregular shapes and heights, that…a nigher and lower mountain will, in most states of the atmosphere, effacingly shade itself away into a higher and further one; that an object, bleak on the former's crest, will, for all that, appear nested in the latter's flank. ("P," 209)

The generic peregrinations of the tale, from the quasi-realist register of the beginning (in which a contemporary narrator updates his eighteenth-century farmhouse in the Berkshires with a porch) to that of romance or adventure ("I'll launch my yawl—ho, cheerly, heart!") to that of fairy tale (in which rams and birds "pilot" the traveler toward his destination and trees obligingly "crook out an arm" to "catch" tossed bridles), suggest that this tale about creating homes for imaginary beings suffers, itself, from generic homelessness.

In comparing the "omission" of a piazza on his Berkshires retreat to "a picture-gallery" without a "bench," the narrator suggests that one of the piazza's primary affordances is to enable its benefactor to indulge in this picturesque confusion, to which it is an honor to bear witness: this "circle of the stars cut by the circle of the mountains" would be invisible "had the site been chosen five rods off" ("P," 205). If the "marble halls" of western Massachusetts' "limestone hills" are tantamount to "picture-galleries," they demand a style of attention that is regular and lingering: "beauty is like piety—you cannot run and read it; tranquility and constancy, with, now-a-days, an easy chair, are needed" ("P," 206). At the same time, however, the sublimity of the vista (its "oceanic" size and anesthetizing

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literary critics, "affordance"—the "complimentarity between animal and environment"—was traditionally thought about in relation to natural ecosystems but now discussed mainly in terms of man-made artifacts or habitats. See J.J. Gibson, "The Theory of Affordances," *Perceiving, Acting, and Knowing*, Eds. R.E. Shaw and J. Bransford, (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1977).

uniformity) lulls the observer into a kind of reverie or trance, in which landscape morphs into seascape:

> [L]ong ground-swells roll the slanting grain, and little wavelets of the grass ripple over upon the low piazza, as their beach, and the blown down of dandelions is wafted like the spray, and the purple of the mountains is just the purple of the billows, and a still August noon broods upon the deep meadows, as a calm upon the Line. ("P," 209)

This flaccid or lax state of attention readily tautens back into a fine-grained responsiveness to the tiniest variations in scenery: "the first peep of a strange house, rising beyond the trees, is for all the world like spying, on the Barbary coast, an unknown sail" ("P," 209). Thus, the piazza is a space especially hospitable to what Nicholas Dames calls the "periodic or rhythmic punctuation" of attention, hosting a proclivity toward the ebbs and flows of attention that are hallmarks of nineteenth-century novel reading.[162] Reclined in the "easy-chair" of his piazza, the narrator reads his surroundings keenly and haphazardly by turns, and this period of reading finally enables him, after a "year or more," to perceive "some uncertain object…, mysteriously snugged away,…in a sort of purpled breast pocket, high up in a hopper-like hollow, or sunken angle, among the northwestern mountains" ("P," 209). It is a glimmer, "only visible, and then but vaguely, under certain witching conditions of light and shadow" ("P," 209), which generates a catalogue of finely discrepant designations:"one spot of radiance, where all else was shade" ("P," 210); a "glen, or grotto" that "glow[s] like a Potosi mine" when a rainbow's end has buried itself there ("P," 211); a "golden sparkle" ("P," 211); "a broader gleam, as of a silver buckler, held sunwards over some croucher's head" ("P," 211); a "dazzling like a deep-sea dolphin" ("P," 212).

Given its brevity, "The Piazza" is impressively intertextual, sown with explicit and tacit homages to Shakespeare, Spenser, Cervantes, Tennyson, the Brothers Grimm, and

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[162] See Nicholas Dames, *The Physiology of the Novel: Reading, Neural Science, and the Form of Victorian Fiction*, (Oxford: OUP, 2007).

Anglo-Saxon folklore, and chronicles of the First French Republic, among others. The twinkling turns out to be sunlight refracting off a freshly shingled roof or a smudged windowpane (it is never entirely clear which).[163] The journey to "fairy-land" itself is strewn with bits of writerly counsel from predecessors such as Spenser, Cervantes, and Shakespeare: the narrator laments that no one "could inform [him]" how to reach fairy-land, "not even one Edmund Spenser, who had been there—so he wrote me—further than that to reach fairy-land, it must be voyaged to, and with faith;" happening upon a herd of "drowsy cattle," he remembers that "the enchanted never eat. At least, so says Don Quixote, the sagest sage that ever lived;" stumbling upon Marianna's cabin at last, he notices the fuzzy hearth-stone, patched with "sod," and recalls that Oberon, "grave authority in fairy-lore," maintains that "with hearth-stones in fairy-land, the natural rock, though housed,…preserves to the last its fertilizing charm" ("P," 215).

"Fairy-land" turns out to be a "mere palanquin" precariously balanced "in a pass between two worlds, participant of neither" ("P," 216). Its dimensions are exceedingly diminutive—"a little, low-storied, grayish cottage, capped, nun-like, with a peaked roof"—and the atmosphere that envelops it is defined by occlusions of light and sound: silence and shadows. This mountainous refuge is "hushed with vines" and teeming with "muffling ferns;" even human voices are "mute[d]" : "the stillness [i]s so still, deafness might have forgot itself" ("P," 217). Upon reaching "fairy-land," the narrator asks Marianna, the young woman he finds residing there:

> 'Have you, then, so long sat at this mountain-window where but clouds and vapors pass, that, to you, shadows are as things, though you speak of them as of phantoms; that by familiar knowledge, working like a second sight, you can, without looking for them, tell just where they are though, as having mice-like feet, they creep about, and

[163] Later in the story, this smudged glass sheet will become a lens through which, "as through a leveled telescope" ("P," 217), the narrator glimpses his own home, now converted into "King Charming's palace" ("P," 218).

> come and go; that, to you, these lifeless shadows are as living friends, who, though out of sight, are not out of mind, even in their faces—is it so?' ("P," 220)

This set of inquiries, and Marianna's nonchalant rejoinder—"'that way I never thought of it'"—only seem imaginable, or enunciable, from *within* a diegetic context, or from within a state of readerly engrossment in one. From the vantage of fictional character, or a reader immersed in its universe, the inanimate ("lifeless shadows," or clusters of letters on a page) is readily considered sentient ("living friends"). But Marianna's cottage also evokes the tenuousness of fiction, the way it teeters between nothingness and existence. The cramped discomfort of her dwelling—abuzz with flies and wasps, with only stools for seats, whose desperately lonely tenant can neither sleep nor dream—suggests a radical discomfiture inherent in this uncanny ontological space. The inclusion of a detail whose irrelevance is later foregrounded poignantly denudes realism's artifice: the "low cross-pile of silver birches" prettily stacked against the outer wall of Marianna's hut turns out to be purely decorative; she confides to the narrator that the "'chimney-place'" has fallen into desuetude, "'blocked up with snow, just like a hollow stump'" (P," 219), so that "'in winter no fox could den in'" her hut ("P," 129). The purposelessness of the firewood evokes the merely aesthetic function of all realist detail, and the way in which the defunct fireplace renders her quarters inhospitable to even the hardiest of creatures seems to underscore the paradoxical austerity and even ugliness of an aesthetic that is just for show.[164] Like the "gleam" from a "hermit's hut," toward which, per Gaston Bachelard, we "flee in thought in search of a real refuge,"[165] Marianna's window has exercised an incantatory power over the narrator. But far

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[164] This reading implicitly runs counter to Roland Barthes's seminal theory of the literary reproduction of empirical reality, in which he argues that it is precisely the accumulation of seemingly random or gratuitous detail that reinforces the reader's sense that a "realist" text is "true" to external reality. See "The Reality Effect," *The Rustle of Language*, Trans. Richard Howard, (Berkeley: UC Press, 1989), 141-48.

[165] Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space: The Classic Look at How We Experience Intimate Places* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), 31.

from "the tap-root of the function of inhabiting,"[166] he discovers an unlivable space incapable of extending the solace of intimacy and protection.

Elaine Scarry argues that "the visual glide of the transparent over the solid," or "glaze of the iridescent on the persistent," is crucial to enabling "sensory mimesis…in the total absence of any sensory assistance (that is,…in verbal narrative or poetry[167]"). However, "The Piazza" enlists this layering procedure as a means of reinforcing, rather than attenuating, the vulnerability of fictional universes.[168] Whereas, per Scarry, bovine shadows on the wall of the Talbothays dairy in Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* "confirm the solidity of the wall as well as the solidity of the cows" (Scarry, 19), "The Piazza" denies shadows any such certifying authority: "a broad shadow stealing on" and a "shaggy shadow" look as if they might be "cast by some gigantic condor, floating at brooding poise on outstretched wings" or a "large, black Newfoundland dog" ("P," 219), respectively. By "wip[ing] away into [themselves] all lesser shades of rock or fern" ("P, 219), the shadows perhaps demonstrate to the narrator (but not to Marianna) the hardness of the earth, but because their origins remain speculative they are tautologies: the narrator replies to Marianna's deduction, "'you watch the cloud,'" with the corrective, "'no, a shadow; a cloud's, no doubt—though that I cannot see'" ("P," 219).

In Marianna's case, the tautology is further exacerbated: Scarry claims that a dense object skimmed by a diaphanous one is an effective rhetorical tactic for "coaxing into solidity" (Scarry, 15) within a tactile vacuum, precisely because the sturdiness of a thick surface or three-dimensional object is intensified when brushed in the reader's imagination

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166 Ibid., 31.
167 Elaine Scarry, *Dreaming by the Book*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 17-18. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text.
168 Scarry writes, "the glide of the transparent over the surface of something else is, as was acknowledged earlier, only one way of achieving solidity but so key a way that Proust and Hardy (and Hayao Miyazaki) rely on it at moments when the fiction is very fragile."

by something sheer and two-dimensional (she uses the example of gauze) that "approximate[s] the phenomenology of imaginary objects" in its oneiric quality (Scarry, 22). This ontological contrast—between a thing whose actual existence is sensually adjacent to the mental image of it and a thing whose actual appearance is very different from its mental image—is essential to fiction's goal of "duplicat[ing] the phenomenology of perception" (Scarry, 23). Yet, while the narrator can see the ground even if the sky is blocked, from within her hut Marianna's vision is marked by an even more excessive reduction: as she sews beside the window, the shadow falls across her needlework. Thus, the umbra of an aerosol "'dusk[s]'" ("P," 219) items that are themselves thin and flimsy: patches of cloth, a spool of thread, a filed sliver of steel wire. For her, nothing is consolidated; her world is one to whose substantiality she is not even qualified to attest.[169]

Fairy-land's sole inhabitant views the narrator's provenance in the same way he'd previously viewed hers: through her window, the narrator marvels at the "sight of a far-off, soft, azure world" ("P," 217). Yet the view's very enticements are also tiresome for Marianna, who longs to "'look upon whoever the happy being is who lives there!'" ("P," 222). Crucially, the verbalization of this longing signifies a reprieve or escape from the epistemological constraints of "fairy-land" : " 'do you know,' she said at last, *as stealing from her story*, '…who lives yonder?'" ("P," 217, emphases mine). Marianna has been telling the narrator how she and her brother came to live in this forbidding place, but her question can be interpreted not only diegetically as an interruption of this autobiographical account, but meta-narratively, as a query that holds in abeyance the very laws that preside over her own existence, such as it is: in asking about the narrator's home she is in fact asking about her

[169] Scarry argues that this is a service that characters within fiction often render the reader: "For us, all fictionally asserted objects are equally airy…But for Marcel inside the fiction, the walls are certainly more substantial, and his own reports that this is so become very influential. We stand in relation to Marcel in somewhat the same way that an earth station stands to persons inside a space ship."

own origins. She is a character asking its author how it came to be. It is, of course, the narrator's own rustic farmhouse that "glimmer[s] much like this mountain one from the piazza" ("P," 218), yet he chooses not to relieve Marianna of her curiosity regarding its proprietor: "'for your sake, Marianna, [I] well could wish that I were that happy one of the happy house you dream you see; for then you would behold him now'" ("P," 222). The narrator's reluctance to disclose his identity to Marianna can be understood in light of Melville's idea that chancing upon an original entails a radical dispossession of the author.[170] In observing his property from Marianna's vantage, the narrator "hardly knew it, though [he] came from it" ("P," 217). He cannot, in short, tell her where she comes from because, like all originals, she "come[s] from without" and "write[s] [herself] (Arsic, 8).

"The Piazza" ends with the narrator's decision to "stick to [his] piazza" ("P," 222). In doing so, he embraces the sumptuous "illusion" of the proscenium, choosing the metaphor of an opera house to articulate what he has gained in quitting "fairy-land": the piazza "is [his] box-royal. And this amphitheatre, [his] theatre of San Carlo. Yes, the scenery is magical—the illusion so complete" ("P," 222). The narrator suggests, here, that "fairy-land" is shabby and *dis*illusioning, when viewed behind the scenes. From the anterior, its "golden window" amplifies the sensations of the empirical world; beheld from the back, "the weary face behind it" is a reproach. The narrator is "haunt[ed]" by Marianna's face, metonymic of "many as real a story," as he paces his piazza after dusk. But to be faithful to these stories, through iteration, is also to condemn them. To pay visits to originals is to importune them, to be audacious as well as "luck[y]."

[170] In Arsic's formulation, originals "happen as the negation of the author" (*7½ Times*, 8).

3.2 Glass Houses

The epigraph with which "The Piazza" begins—"With fairest flowers, while summer lasts, and I live here, Fidèle"—elliptically references the Shakespearean namesake of the floating stage on which *The Confidence-Man* unfolds.[171] Moreover, the wrap-around veranda that the narrator of "The Piazza" wishes was within his financial means evokes the design of nineteenth-century steamboats, whose oblong decks encircled the central cabin and offered panoramas of the shore.[172] Both environments are also transitive: the piazza "somehow combin[es] the coziness of in-doors with the freedom of outdoors" ("P," 205) and records subtle fluctuations in temperature ("it is so pleasant to inspect your thermometer there"); the steamboat, on the other hand, symbolizes intermediary space of passage while also maintaining frequent contact with the riverbank, which (like the littoral shore) is an in-between zone of cultural and economic exchange.[173]

More to the point, if also less intuitive, is the way in which both texts use glass as a commentary on the fraught optics of the novel, as well as on the wistfulness of fictional worlds. Melville found glass less beguiling than did his contemporaries. Indeed, in the midst

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[171] Fidèle is the sobriquet that King Cymbeline's daughter, Imogen, adopts when she decides to disguise herself as a boy, and thus a fitting name for the setting of Melville's novel-length "masquerade." Condensed though it is, this epigraph, taken from Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*, expresses the confusions, mix-ups, and convolutions that propel the play forward. The quotation is found in the second scene of Act IV and spoken by Arviragus, who does not yet know that he is Imogen's biological brother, over what he mistakenly believes to be the corpse of Fidele. "Fairest flowers" refers here to the way in which he promises to decorate the "boy"'s grave. Like the Elizabethan play, which is often categorized by early modern scholars as one of only four Shakespearean romances—a hybrid straddling tragedy and comedy--there is a great deal of critical debate over *The Confidence-Man*'s generic allegiance(s). See, for example, Maureen Quilligan, *The Language of Allegory: Defining the Genre*, in particular her discussion of *The Confidence-Man: His Masquerade* in "The Pretext;" Thomas L. McHaney, "*The Confidence-Man* and Satan's Disguises in *Paradise Lost*," *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 30 (September 1975), 200-206; Elizabeth S. Foster, Introduction, *The Confidence-Man: His Madquerade*, (New York: Hendricks House, 1954); John W. Schroeder, "Sources and Symbols for *The Confidence-Man*," *PMLA*, 66 (June 1951).

[172] See Clay Lancaster's "Transportation Elements in American Architecture," which discusses the "steamboat architecture" vogue that gripped antebellum America in the decade preceding the Civil War, reaching a fever pitch in the Mississippi Valley.

[173] See Margaret Cohen, *The Novel and the Sea*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).

of a transatlantic revival of the "Gothic armature of transparency"[174]—when "profane versions of…temples of light" surged in popularity in the United States and Britain—Melville himself was somewhat anachronistically captivated by stone and marble. In his journal, the "Chrystal Palace" [sic] compares unfavorably to the Egyptian pyramids, with which he had been smitten: "overdone. If smaller would look larger…Vast toy. No substance…Durable materials, but perishable structure. Cant exist 100 years hence" (*J*, 128). Although he did not personally lay eyes on the Crystal Palace until late April 1857, when he visited Sydenham (where it had since been relocated) while spending several weeks in London prior to his return to the United States, in *The Confidence-Man* Melville puts on his protagonist's lips sentiments that anticipate those he would later commit to his journal after his pilgrimage. Relating the experience of exhibiting his "Protean easy chair" at the World's Fair, where he had "'dwelt upon that shining pageant of arts, and moving concourse of nations,'" the confidence man declares himself to have been "'profoundly impressed'": "'the pride of the world glorying in a glass house'" had left him with "'a sense of the fragility of worldly grandeur'" (*C-M*, 47).

Marianna's cottage first mesmerizes the narrator with a "sparkle…of that vividness, it seemed as if it could only come from glass" ("P," 212), and at the end of the story this same windowpane becomes a distorting lens that makes his home unrecognizable. Although the greenhouse, the cathedral, and the Amazonian water lily are often cited as inspirations for the Crystal Palace[175], the cross-section sketch that designer and horticulturalist Joseph Paxton submitted in 1850 to the committee charged with selecting an

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[174] See Emmanuel Alloa, "Architectures of Transparency." *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, No. 53/54 (Spring-Autumn 2008), 321-330.

[175] See Kate Colquhoun's biography of Joseph Paxton, *A Thing in Disguise: The Visionary Life of Joseph Paxton* and Tatiana Halloway's horticultural historiography, *The Flower of Empire: An Amazonian Water Lily, the Quest to Make it Bloom, and the World it Created.*

architect for the Great Exhibition building is startlingly reminiscent of the 19th-century American steamboat. Tremblingly executed in black ink on custard-colored blotting paper, its three tiers—each half as long as the one below and centrally stacked atop one another—correspond to the steamboat's trio of decks (main, boiler, hurricane), plus texas. Moreover, its colonnade-like arrangement is similar in appearance to the description Melville supplies of the Fidèle, "pierced along its great white bulk with two tiers of small embrasure-like windows, well above the waterline" and appointed with "fine promenades, …long galleries, sunny balconies" (*C-M*, 15). Finally, the dome of Crystal Palace, which arched over the top level, recalls the paddlewheel in its spoked circumference and hemispherical shape:[176]

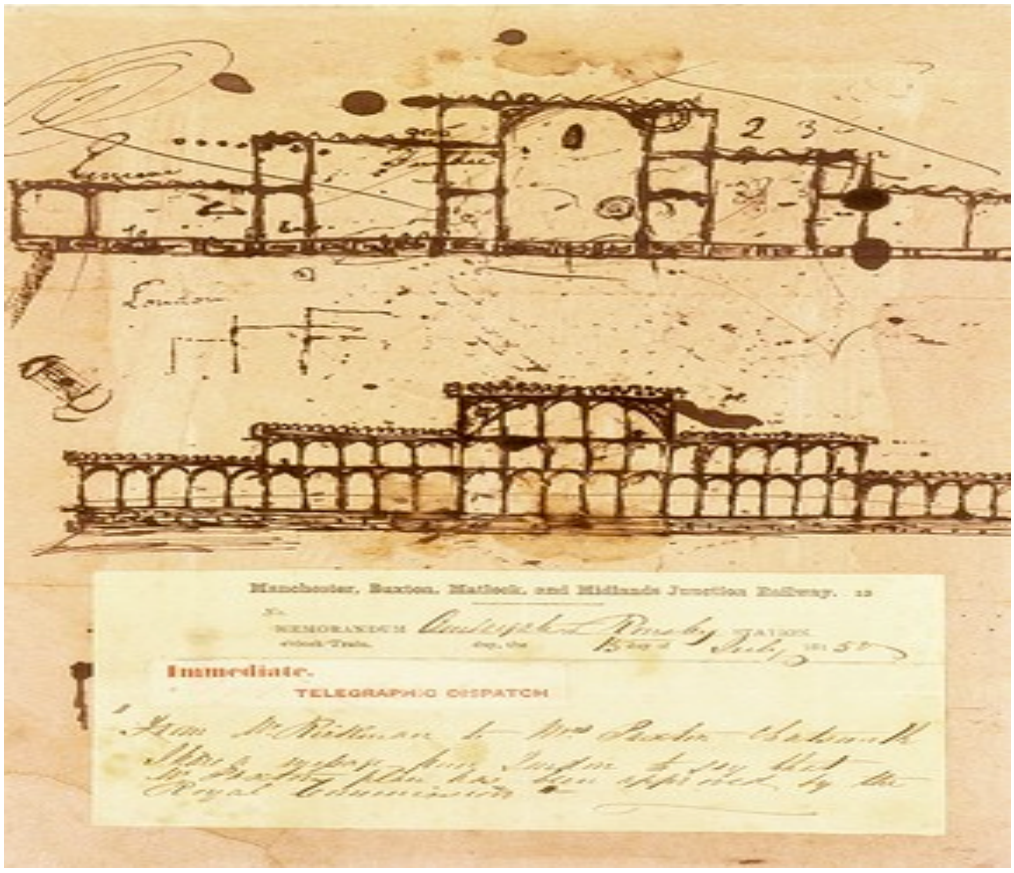

Figure 1.

[176] No photographic evidence of it remains, but it isn't hard to imagine why a famous packet running between Pittsburgh and Cincinnati, built in 1853, the same year that an American heir to the London Crystal Palace was built in New York, was christened *The Crystal Palace*.

Figure 2.

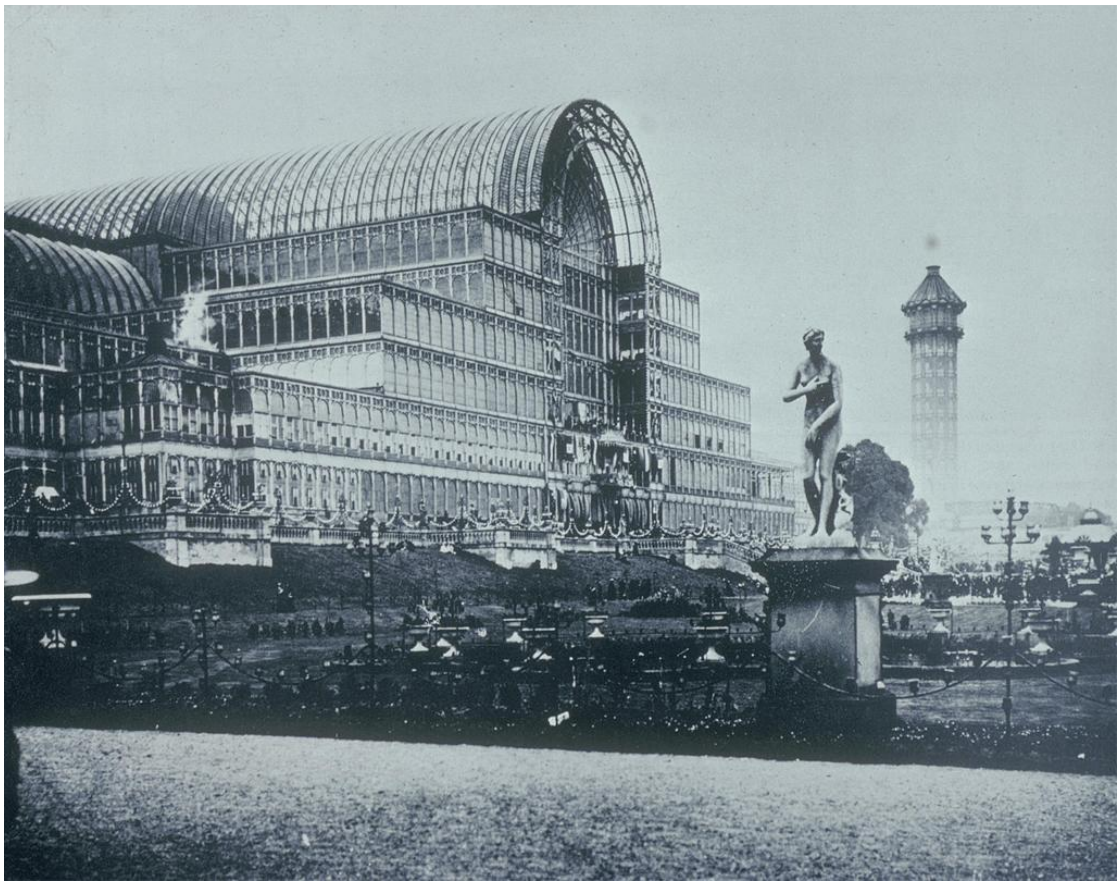

Figure 3.

As a vehicle of transport, the steamboat was notoriously susceptible to disaster,[177] and by superimposing the Fidèle, however covertly, on the nineteenth-century's most celebrated "'glass house,'" Melville doubly insists on the novel's delicacy and imperilment. Although the Fidèle has so far avoided catastrophe, one is portended by the confidence man's reassurance to the gentleman-farmer—who, as he heads to bed, remembers his son's entreaty that he keep in his state room "'something for safety'" (*C-M*, 250)—that any of the salon's stools (which each contain "'a curved tin compartment underneath'") will save his life "'should the boat hit a snag, and go down in the dark'" (*C-M*, 250).

3.3 Timely Form

The novel and "original" character, which seems to thrive best under other formal auspices (drama, epic poetry, chivalric romance),[178] are harassments to one another. In the remainder of this chapter, I want to shift my discussion from the affective vector of the original's desolation to the narrative vector of its a-centrality. What effect does the original—"already there"—exert on the form that would give it life? Or, put differently, what form can accommodate the original's strange, extra-diegetic, pre-verbal existence? In positing a correlation between "original character" and a "revolving Drummond light,"[179] rather than suggesting that originals are the beneficiaries of an illumination similar to that lavished on sol(il)o(qu)ists in a play or concert, *The Confidence-Man*'s narrator emphasizes the

[177] Though it had undergone many engineering improvements since its advent in 1811, the western steamboat, as compared to its eastern counterpart, remained a vessel highly prone to destruction, often by explosion or fire, due either to structural malfunction or to reckless operation. Furthermore, deck passage—the rough equivalent of steerage class on oceanliners—was especially fraught with danger and hardship (See Louis C. Hunter, *Steamboats on the Western Rivers: An Economic and Technological History*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1949.) Cite archival material from Beinecke.

[178] Meville cites as examples of "originals" Shakespeare's Hamlet, Milton's Satan, and Cervantes' Don Quixote.

[179] Melville, Herman. *The Confidence-Man: His Masquerade*. Eds. Hershel Parker and Mark Niemeyer. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2006. 238. All further citations will be included in the text.

kinetic quality of these characters, who are not prompted to act or speak when ornamented by a white glow, but who themselves stimulate vitality within, or bestow tempo on, their texts. Originals, in other words, stir the narratives in which they appear to movement, rather than amassing presence as a result of representation.[180]

Bartleby has a dizzying centrality that arises from an asymmetry between the lawyer's strenuous efforts to centralize him, and the fact that he is too scant a figure to shoulder the mantle of such directed attention. Nothing distinguishes Bartleby except his exceptional nondescriptness; even his quirks are boring: he subsists on a single-food diet of ginger nuts, never leaves the office, stares at the wall all day, and does without a mirror, pillow, or plate. His negligible alimentary, recreational, and hygienic needs lend him an anemic dullness, or phantasmal flimsiness, that defy description: pale, indifferent, blankly, mildly. Bartleby's listless and phlegmatic disposition[181] is in friction with the centrality with which the narrator wishes to ennoble him. His centrality is a matter of effect, rather than selfhood, since these effects are estranged from anything that could be recognized as personality. Thus, the narrator's campaign to devote attention on so spartan and *un*assuming a figure assumes a lop-sidedness that can't be rectified even by his final, discursive bid to restore Bartleby to the obscurity of the Dead Letter Office and the exquisite (but superficial) equilibrium of his valedictory line: "Ah Bartleby! Ah humanity!" (*B*, 34).

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[180] "Drummond Light" would have had two primary connotations for mid-nineteenth-century readers. It would have, in the first place, called to mind the brilliant limelights that P.T. Barnum had installed atop his American Museum at the corner of Broadway and Ann Street in downtown Manhattan during the 1840s (See Hershel Parker, *Herman Melville: A Biography, Volume 2*, (Baltimore: JHU Press, 2002), p. 270; see also, Barnum's own autobiography, *The Life of P.T. Barnum*, originally published in 1855, for an account of the motivations underlying his decision to install Drummond Lights). Secondly, it would have struck contemporary ears as a nod to the theatre: for the first time in 1837 (at London's Covent Garden), and as a matter of course by the 1850s, limelight was used as a standard alternative form of stage lighting, preferable both to carbon arc lamps (which buzzed loudly as they burned) and gaslights (which left everything sprinkled in sooty residue). See Ebbe Almqvist, "Oxygen Applications: The Uses of Oxygen During the Nineteenth Century," in *History of Industrial Gases*. New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers, 2003. 71-74.

[181] Bartleby's vigorous afterlives stand in stark contradiction to his sluggishness on the page. For an account of Bartleby's contemporary applications, most notably his adoption by the Occupy Wall Street movement, see Russ Castronovo, "Occupy Bartleby," *J19*. Vol. 2.2 (Fall 2014), 253-272.

The confidence-man, too is prone to "'make [one's] head spin"' (*C-M*, 178), and I want to address his vertiginous, taxing centrality by way of a short foray into the reception history of the novel itself, which was largely panned by its early critics. In October 1856, several months after finishing *The Confidence-Man*, Melville departed for Scotland, traveling from Glasgow across the European continent and continuing through North Africa and the Levant. He visited England, Italy, France, Belgium, Gibraltar, Algeria, Greece, Lebanon, Egypt, Palestine, and Constantinople before returning to the United States nearly six months later. He landed in New York on May 6, 1857, a little over a month after the publication of *The Confidence-Man*, but it is intriguing that his diaries and personal correspondence from this period give no indication that he either sought to ascertain details about, nor fretted over, its popular reception. Indeed, to the contrary: he appears to have neither sent nor received any letters at all in April 1857,[182] and makes no mention of *The Confidence-Man* in his diary on the first of the month, the day of the novel's publication.[183] Presumably, then, Melville was spared (at least temporarily) tidings of the dismal reviews that greeted his novel: domestic newspapers from New England to the Midwest excoriated it, while across the Atlantic the reaction was no more charitable. From those whose responses have been transmitted to posterity, we can glean that most contemporary readers found the effects of the novel disagreeable, registering physiologically in the form of mental dyspepsia, lightheadedness, or generalized fatigue.[184]

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[182] See *The Writings of Herman Melville: Correspondence*. Ed. Lynn Horth, (Chicago: Northwestern University Press and The Newberry Library, 1993).

[183] He woke up in Padua, noting tersely that it was a "rainy day," He breakfasted at Café Pedrocchi and, armed with a "great-coat and umbrella," hired a guide to "see the sights." At two o'clock in the afternoon, he departed for Venice, where he sailed to his hotel in a gondola and concluded the evening by "sally[ing] out to piazza of St. Marco" (See *The Writings of Herman Melville: Journals*. Eds. Howard C. Horsford with Lynn Horth. Chicago: Northwestern University Press and The Newberry Library, 1989. 117).

[184] The *Transcript* of Portland, Maine confessed that "we have found it hard reading" and expressed the hope that a sequel "will be better;" in Boston, it was condemned as "ineffably meaningless and trashy" and "deplore[d]" as a "reckless perversion of high abilities;" a rural Massachusetts daily called it "the work of one

In a novel consisting principally of lengthy tracts of dialogue, dialogue tags are sparing in, and often altogether lacking from, *The Confidence-Man*. Moreover, the protagonist is often (maddeningly) referred to simply as "the other," which on the one hand stymies a sense of intimate acquaintance with him by preserving his anonymity (only the Cosmopolitan has a proper name, Frank Goodman), and on the other often obliges the reader to re-visit protracted back-and-forths in order to (re-)establish the itinerary of an exchange. Lexically and syntactically, too, the text induces wooziness: an abundance of double negatives (e.g. "not" followed by a negative prefix: *ir-/dis-/-il/-un/-non*), byzantine sentence structures, and tortuous grammar culminate in a text that often feels tangled or overgrown, poised to engulf any reader who would dare to rush through it. Furthermore, the reader flags not only from these exertions, but from an increasingly oppressive sense that performing them is pointless, or from the sheer tedium of a repeating narrative. Indeed, the novel begins with its protagonist drifting off, and ends with him leading a fellow passenger to bed, as if to wink self-deprecatingly at its various soporific effects. In a rousing salvo in the spring 2012 issue of *NOVEL*, entitled "What Can Reading Do?," Kate Flint asks to what extent "our theories cope with" homelier siblings of novel reading's more winsome symptoms (e.g. absorption, identification, sympathy, aesthetic delight, etc.). Flint cites uncomfortable effects such as "irritation and incomprehension" (Flint, 20) among those to which critical attention is overdue. Melville was himself a partisan of these challenging

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not in love or sympathy with his kind," while Philadelphia's *North American and United States Gazette* rued the novel's prolixity: "humor peeps out occasionally, though buried under quite too many words, and you read on and on, expecting something more than you ever find, to be choked off…without getting the end of the story;" nor did the Cincinnati *Enquirer* pull its punches, declaring it "one of the dullest and dismally monotonous books we remember to have read." On the other side of the Atlantic, the *Literary Gazette* sneered that "those who, remembering the nature of the author's former performances, take it up in the expectation of encountering a wild and stirring fiction, will be tolerably sure to lay it down ere long with an uncomfortable sensation of dizziness in the head," while the *Illustrated Times* judged the book "indigestible" and claims "we are almost justified in affirming that its *génre* [*sic*] is the *génre ennuyeux*;" meanwhile, other London commentators pronounced it "upon the whole flat," "of all his works…the hardest nut to crack," and "a strange book, the object of which it is difficult to detect."

effects, and in *Bartleby, the Scrivener* and *The Confidence-Man*, he not only valorizes frustrated reading *in se*, but seriously contemplates its gratifications.

In *The Confidence-Man*, sartorial transformation is frequent and dramatic, but expositions of it are entirely excluded from the narrative. This exclusion prevents the reader from any certainty about when, where, and how these moments of costuming occur—an astounding narrative negation if we consider that the protagonist of *The Confidence-Man* cycles through eight disguises over the course of the novel: boarding the Fidèle as a deaf-mute, he is in "cream-colors" (*C-M*, 9); as the crippled Black Guinea shaking a "coal-sifter of a tambourine," he is clad in blackface and "tow-cloth attire" (*C-M*, 17); as the widower John Ringman, he wears somber-hued mourning weeds; he sports a "gray coat and white tie" (*C-M*, 37) while advocating for the Seminole Widow and Orphan Asylum and the World's Charity; as the president of the Black Rapids Coal Company, John Truman, he opts for "a tasseled traveling-cap" (*C-M*, 54); peddling the Samaritan Pain Dissuader, as an herb-doctor, he switches to an anodyne "snuff-colored surtout, the collar thrown back" (*C-M*, 82); for his tenure as a representative of the Philosophical Intelligence Office, he selects "a mean five-dollar suit," accessorizing with "a small brass plate inscribed P.I.O." hung around his neck "collar-wise by a chain" (*C-M*, 118); finally, as the Cosmopolitan, he emerges in

> a vesture barred with various hues, that of the cochineal predominating, in style participating of a Highland plaid, Emir's robe, and French blouse: from [whose] plaited sort of front peeped glimpses of a flowered regatta-shirt, while…white trowsers of ample duck flowed over maroon-colored slippers, and a jaunty smoking-cap of regal purple crowned him off at top. (*C-M*, 136)

What remains figurative in *Billy Budd*, then, is actualized in *The Confidence-Man*: each new shade or article of attire appears in such a way that the process of its emergence is effaced. The cosmopolitan, whose "parti-hued and...plumagey aspect" (136) is a loose embodiment of the rainbow, is not only the confidence-man's final incarnation but also an index of the preceding ones: the repository as well as the culmination of his masquerade.

This final disguise—in which tones, patterns, and weaves smear together with a kind of psychedelic vibrancy—enters the novel almost exactly at its midpoint, so that the number of pages in which the confidence-man has operated under his previous seven disguises is nearly commensurate with, or could nearly fit within, those dominated by the cosmopolitan. Moreover, the number of disguises preceding the last—that is, seven—corresponds exactly to the quantity of bands in the rainbow. In *Billy Budd*, the narrator asks: "who in the rainbow can draw the line where the violet tint ends and the orange tint begins? Distinctly we see the different colors, but where exactly does the first one blendingly enter into the other?"[185] In the later text, this pair of questions metaphorizes the ambiguous gradations of Captain Vere's madness, but in *The Confidence-Man* is might be asked of the seepage that marks the protagonist.

The relentless seriality, or laterality, of the confidence-man is vertiginous; without any diegetic demi-states in which the narrative peeps in on its partially-clothed protagonist *in flagrante delicto*, absorbed in the gymnastics of an extravagant change of wardrobe, the reader must fastidiously track him. Despite scoffing at the idea that any analogue obtains between a novel reader and "a stranger entering, map in hand, Boston town"—"the streets may be very crooked, he may often pause; but, thanks to his true map, he does not hopelessly lose his way" (*C-M*, 77)—*The Confidence-Man* requires a kind of cartographic labor from its reader. In order to supervise the protagonist's trajectory, the reader must rigorously attend to a winding concatenation of prolepses and analepses that serve to alert her to the protagonist's various embodiments. Often, the transposition of a token, a space, or a piece of information notifies her that a "new" character is nothing more than the confidence man's latest incognito. An exchange between the confidence-man in his third guise and a merchant in

[185] Herman Melville, *Billy Budd, Sailor: An Inside Narrative*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1962), 102.

chapter four exemplifies how the process of skipping backward and sprinting ahead becomes obligatory if one is to keep tabs on him. Here, "the familiarity of…old acquaintance" with which the confidence-man greets the merchant is hardly mutual: to the former's incredulous "'don't you know me?'" the latter returns an equally nonplussed, "'no, certainly.'" (*C-M*, 26). The confidence-man's recommendation that the merchant refer to his business cards to authenticate his own identity (to which the merchant, offended, retorts: "'I hope I know myself!'") triggers the reader, at least, to affiliate John Ringman with the Black Guinea, who had placed his "leather stump" over one of these very cards when it fluttered to the deck as the merchant raided his wallet for an alm in the previous chapter.

The cosmopolitan "'federates, in heart as in costume, something of the various gallantries of men under various suns'" (*C-M*, 138), and to recognize him as an instance of the confidence-man is to situate him within a sequence or inventory. Indeed, in chapter 14 the practice of passing off "sections" for "wholes" is indicted for being anti-realist (*C-M*, 75): borrowing an example from entomology, the narrator argues that the character "as much at variance with itself as the caterpillar is with the butterfly into which it changes" is "not false but faithful to facts" (*C-M*, 75). Yet *The Confidence-Man* represents an accretion that is irreducible to a totality: for to read its protagonist as the sum of his parts is to overlook the multiple centrality that subtends the novel, which is driven not by sweeping up its readers in the exploits of a single protagonist, but by conscripting them in the task of assembling the protagonist's singleness. This associative telos—recognizing a coherent protagonist across numerous *ex*teriorities becomes to a certain extent the objective of reading the novel—supplants the foliations of *in*teriority by which the nineteenth-century novel typically establishes characterological centrality.

3.4 'In a wonderful manner touched' : Grasping (at) Character in *Bartleby, the Scrivener* and *The Confidence-Man*

Bartleby, the Scrivener and *The Confidence-Man* levy demands on the reader's attention that are usually thought of as contrary to centrality, casting centrality as inherent to that which circumscribes or responds to it. We come to know these protagonists, I want to suggest, rhythmically: that is, we get no insight into them but we "see" them as a point of perpetual stasis or of incessant change within their narratives. If it is difficult to care *about* Bartleby or the confidence man as identificatory protagonists, the fine caliber of attention they exact amounts to a kind of custodianship. Caroline Levine has recently recuperated the Victorian link between literature and music, which the twentieth- and twenty-first-century impulse to "resist the headlong, unthinking absorption in…time-bound…literary forms"[186] (e.g. plot and meter) has subordinated in favor of spatial concepts conscripted from the visual arts (e.g. perspective and point-of-view). *Bartleby* and *The Confidence-Man* offer points of view that are hermeneutically neutered by oddly—and, to a certain extent, off-puttingly—"time-bound" protagonists. Branka Arsic's virtuosic interpretation of Bartleby according to seven different theoretical models, and Sianne Ngai's contention that the latter novel allegorizes "the formal problem of tone," the umbrella of which "encompasses the more attended-to problem of character" and thus makes it "part and parcel of [*The Confidence-Man*'s] larger preoccupation with affect" (Ngai, 52), are the most exciting recent contributions to a scholarly fascination with the impersonality of their central characters. For both critics, this generality or breadth (Arsic's idea that Bartleby is capable of simultaneously representing "antithetical" and contradictory "'type[s]' of thinking;" Ngai's argument that the confidence man facilitates "tone," which she defines as "an affective relay

[186] Caroline Levine, *Forms: Whole, Rhythm, Hierarchy, Network*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 51.

between subject and object in which feeling paradoxically produces a 'beyondness' rather than nearness or immediacy") is at once tremendously fecund and at the same time marked by sterility or chilliness (Ngai, for her part, calls *The Confidence-Man* "Melville's most emotionally unfriendly novel"). Ngai ascribes the fact that *The Confidence-Man* is "not easily engaged with emotionally" to its "tonal noisiness," or its "disrupt[ion]" of the "imaginary symmetry[ies]" of sympathy and projection. The novel "obtrude[s] itself as a text that readers will have *trouble caring about*" (Ngai, 81) at the same time that it is one "which we cannot *not* care about…*without feeling*, well, bad" (Ngai, 84). Yet, I would argue, in both *Bartleby* and *The Confidence-Man*, Melville is interested in recasting "means of and motives for literary experience" (Lynch, 131). He suggests that narratorial and readerly investments in character not governed by the normative reciprocities—whereby moral enrichment compensates for expenditures of time and attention—may be the most prudent of all, precisely because they are imbalanced.

Despite his immobility, or paradoxically because of it, Bartleby possesses a potent organizational power over his environment. The substances with which the narrator suggests that Bartleby shares an affinity—Windsor soap, plaster-of-Paris—strongly afford stroking and rubbing; yet the moments in which Bartleby's materiality is foregrounded are those in which the narrator most emphatically asserts that he is hopelessly beyond reach: "I should have as soon thought of turning my pale plaster-of-paris bust of Cicero out of doors" (*B*, 11); "I might as well have assayed to strike fire with my knuckles against a bit of Windsor soap" (*B*, 12). Smoothness, a textural property that ordinarily tempts touch, becomes in *Bartleby* a metaphor for the impossibility of contact: "Not a wrinkle of agitation rippled him. Had there been the least uneasiness, anger, impatience, or impertinence in his manner; in

other words had there been anything *ordinarily human* about him, doubtless I should have violently dismissed him from my premises" (*B*, 11, emphases mine). Bartleby himself is notoriously averse to any sort of tactile encounter, from the erotic to the pecuniary to the occupational: definitely a bachelor, there is a strong suggestion that he is also a virgin;[187] he won't "snatch" a "quadruplicate" in order to confirm its accuracy; won't handle money; won't grip a pen; won't so much as press his finger to "the incipient tie of a bit of red tape" (*B*, 16) in order to help the narrator bundle a sheaf of papers. Yet, despite a sleekness that interferes with touch, Bartleby has a curious viscosity: he "cling[s]" (*B*, 27) to the narrator, and the stickiness of his anaphora ("'I prefer not to'") modifies the idiom of his workplace.[188] While he may refuse to enter into "circulation"[189] by shunning the model of capitalist productivity, Bartleby has a certain adhesive quality that imitates circulation, continuously "touching" or "moving" those around him, though he never so much as brushes against them.

The objects of or occasions for Bartleby's refusals matter far less than the ways in which what Deleuze calls his "formula"[190] *de*forms, discombobulates, and turns topsy-turvy the carefully ordered universe of the law office, "in a wonderful manner touch[ing]" the lawyer, his fellow scriveners (Turkey and Nippers), and the errand boy (Ginger Nut), who together comprise its inhabitants. Bartleby sets everyone around him "staggering," "twitching," "reeling," and "veering about." "[O]blivious to everything" as he stares at the

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[187] For more on this point, see Branka Arsic, "Melville's Celibatory Machines: *Bartleby*, *Pierre*, and "The Paradise of Bachelors,"' *Diacritics*, Vol. 35, No. 4 (Winter 2005), 81-100.
[188] See Marvin Hunt, "Turning Tongues and Heads in Bartleby, the Scrivener," ESQ: A Journal of the American Renaissance, Vol. 40 (fourth quarter, 1994).
[189] Naomi C. Reed, "The Specter of Wall-Street: *Bartleby, the Scrivener* and the Language of Commodities," *American Literature*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (June 2004), 247-273.
[190] See Gilles Deleuze, "Bartleby; or, The Formula," *Essays Critical and Clinical*, Trans. Daniel W. Smith and Michael A. Greco, (New York: Verso, 1998), 68-90. Deleuze argues that the Formula "carve[s] out a kind of foreign language within language" (72) and that its articulation obliterates the very possibility of language itself. In other words, despite its grammatical construction it is agrammatical in its performance.

"dead wall" on the other side of the air shaft onto which the window of his makeshift cubicle looks, he nevertheless "goads [the narrator] to encounter him in new opposition" (*B*, 16), spurring a narrative (re-)cycle that effectively tells over and over what is essentially a singulative event: Bartleby preferred not to.

From the moment it is first uttered, Bartleby's "'I prefer not to'" obliterates the "cool tranquility" and "peace" of the lawyer's "snug retreat…among rich men's bonds and mortgages and title deeds" (*B*, 4). The law office adheres to rules of decorum and conduct that may verge on absurdity but are nevertheless highly codified. Bartleby's neat, polite sentence reduces them to chaos. Even as the narrator deploys Enlightenment or pragmatist principles in an attempt to comprehend Bartleby, trying to reason with him or conscripting Joseph Priestley and Jonathan Edwards[191] in his efforts to penetrate Bartleby's psyche, he is physically debilitated by his scrivener: Bartleby leaves him "stunned," paralyzed ("for a few moments, I was turned into a pillar of salt"), "aggravated," "faltering," or even jolted into "spasmodic passions." All of these adjectives—whether modifying bodily, mental, or spiritual conditions—are etymologically somatic and indicate degrees of motion or agility: shaking, rigidity, heaviness, stumbling. It is as if Bartleby has physically collided with his employer, though the two never exchange so much as a handshake.[192]

Bartleby's passivity thus amplifies, rather than minimizes, his impact. In *Hidden Rhythms*, Eviatar Zerubavel argues that "determining whether a certain situation or event is

[191] See Andrew Lyndon Knighton, *Idle Threats: Men and the Limits of Productivity in Nineteenth-Century America*, (New York: NYU Press, 2012) for an account of Bartleby that places this reluctance within the context of a tradition of indolence and unproductivity in nineteenth-century American culture.

[192] The narrator and Bartleby physically encounter one another just twice in the course of the narrative: the first time the narrator "jostles" Bartleby (much to the latter's chagrin) as a result of Turkey bumping into him as he tries to join them behind the green screen. The second time, on finding Bartleby dead in the prison yard, he passes his hand over his eyelids to lower them.

'normal' or not depends, to a large extent, on its temporal profile,"[193] and indeed Bartleby's oddness derives primarily from the ways in which he fails to conform to the rhythms of "No.—Wall Street" (*B*, 5), which are undoubtedly zany, off-kilter, and even perhaps pathological—but nonetheless highly routinized and deferential to an implacable (horo)logic that centers around noontime. Perhaps unsurprisingly, given that it was composed a mere two years after the establishment of a Prime Meridian at Greenwich, England in 1851, *Bartleby* is highly animated by meridional concerns. The lawyer employs two clerks, Turkey and Nippers, the former of whom is "before twelve o'clock…the quickest, steadiest creature" but in the afternoon becomes "altogether too energetic," seized by a "strange, inflamed, flurried, flight recklessness of activity" that invariably leads to "blot[ted]" copies, "racket[s] with his chair," "split" pens, and "spill[ing] his sand-box" (*B*, 6). Nippers, on the other hand, has an "irascible, brandy-like disposition" that is "mainly observable in the morning." Thus, the colleagues' "fits relieved each other like guards. When Nippers' was on, Turkey's was off; and *vice versa*" (*B*, 8). This is a version of clockwork, however kooky, and Bartleby's entry into it is inaugurated by a period of prodigious productivity: the lawyer recalls that "at first Bartleby did an extraordinary quantity of writing. As if long famishing for something to copy, he seemed to gorge himself on my documents" (*B*, 10). This initial prolific-ness, described in terms that beg comparison to hyperphagia, is soon replaced by an anorexic refusal to ingest: Bartleby abstains from both work and food.

The law office is a scene of acceleration—its governing chronological increment is the "instant," its dominant tempo *presto* or *affrettando*—and Bartleby fails to keep up with it

[193] Eviatar Zerubavel, *Hidden Rhythms: Schedules and Calendars in Social Life*, *(*Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 1985).

from the outset.[194] The narrator is impatient with "the least delay" and frequently refers to the "haste of business," his "natural expectation of instant compliance," or the fact that "business hurried" him. Meanwhile, Bartleby's immobility is in stark contrast to such frenzy: he discharges all his acts "slowly," "serenely," "calmly," "gently." Even during his binging phase, the lawyer frets that he "wrote on silently, palely, mechanically" (*B*, 10), and Bartleby's very first appearance in the doorway of the lawyer's Wall Street chambers is described as an "advent," suggesting that he is synchronized to messianic or eschatological time, which knows no urgency. The law office, in contrast, propels forward at a brisk, often brusque, clip consonant with the larger artery of industrial society and commercial capitalism within which it is nested and for which it serves as microcosm or symbol: Manhattan's financial district. Bartleby is the perfect photographic subject, in his near-total arrest, yet he eludes capture or documentation.

In a kindred way, the confidence man is positioned both on the periphery and in the center of his narrative, rousing the attention of those within the diegesis but unable to withstand close scrutiny. At the very beginning of the novel, a deaf-mute passenger—"in every sense of the word a stranger" (*C-M*, 9)—boards the steamship Fidèle at St. Louis.

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[194] Many of the critical approaches to *Bartleby,* whether they interpret its title character as a Christ-like or prophetic figure, as a clinical or psychological case, as a Marxist disciple, or as a blocked writer, are united by a sensitivity to chronometric tensions within the text—between secular and sacred, corporate and pre-industrial, utilized and wasted time. See, in particular, Jonathan Elmer, "'Bartleby,' Empson, and Pastoral Pleasures," *J19: The Journal of Nineteenth-Century Americanists*, Vol. 2.1 (Spring 2014), 24-33; Richard J. Zlogar, "Body Politics in 'Bartleby' : Leprosy, Healing, and Christ-ness in Melville's 'Story of Wall-Street,'" *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, Vol. 53, No. 4 (March 1999), 505-529; Amit Pinchevski, "Bartleby's Autism: Wandering Along Uncommunicably," *Cultural Critique*, Vol. 78 (Spring 2011). 27-59; Morris Beja, "Bartleby and Schizophrenia," *The Massachusetts Review*, Vol. 19, No. 3 (Autumn 1978), 555-568; Rosemarie Garland-Thompson, "The Cultural Logic of Euthanasia: 'Sad Fancyings' in Herman Melville's *Bartleby*," *American Literature*, Vol. 76, No. 4 (December 2004). 777-806; Ann Smock, "Quiet," *Qui Parle*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (Fall 1998); 68-100; and Dan McCall,*The Silence of Bartleby*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989). Gillian Brown provides arguably the most comprehensive analysis of Bartleby's immobility, arguing that "Melvilles's tale describes an itinerary of what might be called the immobility principle, the reproduction of circulation through tableaux of the stationary. Bartleby's arrested mobility is one such tableau in the nineteenth-century American iconography of stillness featuring invalidism, women, and home (and conflations of these) as predominant figures of restfulness" (see "The Empire of Agoraphobia," *Representations*, No. 20 (Autumn 1987), 134-157).

Almost immediately, he constitutes a site of vexed legibility. "[P]roducing a small slate" on which he scribbles, one at a time, a suite of scriptures that have in common the word "charity" (*C-M*, 11), he leaves this common word unaltered as he transitions from one verse to the next,, scrubbing away those that surround it. The message of his sign is thus provisional in terms of both content and configuration—besides being repeatedly (five times in total) erased and re-articulated, each verse is slightly different in length and thus fits differently within the frame of the slate—as well as itinerant, since the man ambulates as he holds it up, laboriously winding his way through the throng. The deaf-mute's chalked appeals are thus suppler than the two (af)fixed notices with which it directly competes for the attention of the crowd mingling upon the deck of the Fidèle. Both of these other signs are comprised of capital letters and eminently visible: the first is a "placard…offering a reward for the capture of a mysterious imposter" (*C-M*, 9), whose power to convene a group of onlookers is akin to that of a "theatre-bill" (*C-M*, 10); the second is "a gaudy sort of illuminated pasteboard sign,…gilt with the likeness of a razor elbowed in readiness to shave" warning NO TRUST, which the on-board barber has "skillfully executed" himself and suspended from "the customary nail" (*C-M*, 12) above the entrance to his shop.

Most importantly, perhaps, the confidence-man's sign differs vastly in its effects vis-à-vis these other two: whereas the barber's sign elicits no reaction from its audience,[195] and the other prompts it to draw nearer, "it was not with the best relish" that the members of the crowd tolerate the confidence-man "mov[ing] slowly up and down" (*C-M*, 11). They "made no scruple to jostle him aside" (*C-M*, 12) and are eventually provoked to outright aggression:

[195] "[T]hough in a sense not less intrusive than the contrasted ones of the stranger," the barber's sign "did not, as it seemed, provoke any corresponding derision or surprise, much less indignation" (*C-M*, 12).

> some stares…turn into jeers, and some jeers into pushes, and some pushes into punches;…suddenly, in one of his turns, [the confidence-man] was hailed from behind by two porters carrying a large trunk; but as the summons, though loud, was without effect, they accidentally or otherwise swung their burden against him, nearly overthrowing him. (*C-M*, 12)

Ultimately, the confidence-man, "as if not wholly unaffected by his reception," seeks refuge in "a retired spot on the forecastle" (*C-M*, 13). Having booked the cheapest grade of passage and therefore obliged to make his berth on deck, this choice indicates that "he was not entirely ignorant of his place" (*C-M*, 13). But the socio-economic implications of knowing his "place" are subtended by (more meaningful) aesthetic ones.

The confidence-man's slate might be said to present an alternative to the paradigm of commercial advertisement, in which writing becomes legible to readers who glimpse it from a considerable distance or while moving at high speed. The fleeting encounters with ephemera cultivated by the emergent culture of *réclame*[196] are inverted here, where speed is associated with that which is read, rather than with [s]he who reads. Mid-nineteenth-century advertising had not yet supplemented hypertrophy with movement and Technicolor, as would its twentieth-century counterpart, which according to Adorno "all but hit[s] us between the eyes with things as a car, growing to gigantic proportions, careens at us out of a film screen."[197] Despite its lesser sophistication, however, early advertisement anticipates the obsolescence of vicinity as a prerequisite for reading: through font and formatting, it made texts legible even when located at a significant spatial remove from the viewer. The Wanted poster and the barber's monition against credit both demonstrate this phenomenon: they neither need to circu(mambu)late in order to summon attention, nor do they pose obstacles

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[196] Advertising was in its infancy in the United States in the 1850s. In the decade's early years, billboards and newspaper advertisements became fixtures of urban and typographic landscapes.

[197] Walter Benjamin, "These Surfaces for Rent," *The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility and Other Writings on Media*, Eds. Michael W. Jennings, Brigid Doherty, and Thomas Y. Levin, Trans. Edmund Jephcott, Rodney Livingstone, Howard Eiland, (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008), 173-174. 173.

to comprehension despite their distance from the eyes they are designed to attract. The confidence-man's roving slate, on the other hand, is in much closer proximity to its readers but its locus in the midst of the crowd leads to its expulsion and marginalization.

3.5. Queer Aspects: Repetitive Frequency in *Bartleby* and *The Confidence-Man*

Both Bartleby and the confidence man necessitate a repetitive style of narration that is hostile to narrative progression. In each novel(la), faces abound, and those of their respective protagonists are notably eccentric: Bartleby's visage is "singularly sedate" (*B*, 9) and distinguished by its remarkable pallor, while the confidence-man's is so "singularly innocent" that it seems "inappropriate to the time and place" (*C-M*, 11). These misfit physiognomies are accompanied by another untimely "aspect" by which both texts are enthralled: "the relations of…repetition between the narrative and the diegesis"[198] that Gérard Genette calls "narrative frequency."[199] Both *Bartleby* and *The Confidence-Man* privilege the style of frequency that, according to Genette, is likely to "seem purely hypothetical,…ill-formed…, irrelevant to literature" (Genette, 115), and is most commonly associated with modernist texts (but was already present in the eighteenth-century epistolary novel)[200] : "tell[ing] *n* times what happened once." Both texts are, in essence, what Genette calls repeating narratives. Bartleby's chronic refusals to do his boss's bidding, whatever it may be, and the confidence-man's successive (if not verbatim) reiterations on the topic of confidence are recurrences of the same event, if always enacted under slightly different circumstances.

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198 Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, Trans. Jane E. Lewen, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980), 113. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text.

199 "Aspect" is the linguistic or grammatical equivalent to what Genette, in the domain of narrative, calls "frequency."

200 There are four possible frequencies to which narrative temporality can adhere: "a narrative…may tell once what happened once, *n* times what happened *n* times, *n* times what happened once, once what happened *n* times" (Genette, 114).

The (literal) rigor mortis with which *Bartleby* ends—its eponymous protagonist, dead from starvation, fetally "huddled" in the yard of the Tombs, where he has been incarcerated on charges of vagrancy—and the promissory "something more may follow" that concludes *The Confidence-Man* each expresses the profound arrest exemplified by the title characters in both texts. Bartleby's enforced desistence—both in a civic sense (to the extent that he has participated in society), as a consequence of his imprisonment, and a biological one (through death)—as well as the confidence-man's ability to evade apprehension ad infinitum,[201] are both versions of a fundamental stall. In both narratives the dynamism of a recognizable plot arc—the mounting intensity of crises, the exhilarations of peripeteia, the anticipations of climax, the resolution of a dénouement—is flagrantly (for many contemporary readers unbearably) absent.

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Immediately after declaring "'prefer'" to be a "'queer word'" that he "'never use[s] [him]self'" (*B*, 21), Turkey obeys the lawyer's request that he "'please withdraw'" (*B*, 21) with an obsequious, "'oh, certainly, sir, if you *prefer* that I should'" (*B*, 21, emphasis mine). As he exits Bartleby's "hermitage" through the green folding screen, Nippers takes advantage of "glimps[ing]" the narrator to inquire "whether [the narrator] would *prefer* to have a certain paper copied on blue paper or white" (*B*, 21, emphasis mine); the way in which the word "involuntarily rolled off his tongue" drives the narrator to conclude that he "must get rid of a demented man, who already has in some degree turned the tongues, if not the heads of

[201] *The Confidence-Man* begins with multiple exhortations to "catch" the confidence-man: the first is a poster offering a reward for capturing the "mysterious imposter;" the second is a sort of caper, launched by the confidence man himself in the guise of the Black Guinea, that urges passengers aboard the Fidèle to hunt for a coterie of persons (which together make up all but one of the confidence man's avatars) who can vouch for his integrity: in the absence of "documentary proof, any plain paper" attesting that his lameness is not, as a curmudgeonly fellow passenger has alleged, a "'sham, got up for financial purposes,'" the Black Guinea implores his fellow passengers to "'find 'em, find 'em,…and let 'em come quick, and show you all, ge'mmen, dat dis poor ole darkie is werry well wordy of all you kind ge'mmen's kind confidence'" (*C-M*, 21).

myself and clerks" (*B*, 21). If Bartleby acts as a tongue-twister, then, it is not by causing his colleagues to stumble over a barely articulable, highly alliterative phrase, but by introducing a supremely pronounceable, seductive word that slides ever so easily off the tongue. "Prefer" ravishes, rather than flusters, its utterer.

Yet the catchiness of "prefer" is not tantamount to its innocuousness.[202] It does indeed "queer" those things that the narrator, at the beginning of his tale, calls "indispensable to an adequate understanding of the chief character about to be presented" : namely, "[him]self, [his] *employés*, [his] business, [his] chambers, and general surroundings" (*B*, 4). "Queer," itself a famously polyvalent word, was first used as a verb meaning to spoil or ruin another's business prospects—as part of the phrase "queer the pitch," which referred to a competitor's attempt to sabotage a huckster's spiel—shortly before Melville wrote *Bartleby*.[203] If Bartleby's "prefer (not to)" exerts a certain incantatory power over its audience, spellbinding its listeners into parroting the very word that signals Bartleby's *rejection* of mimicry,[204] its consequences are far more pernicious than an echo or refrain might, at first, suggest. Eventually, Bartleby's (negative) preferences damage the lawyer's professional reputation, harm his dealings with clientele, and ultimately necessitate his eviction.

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Like Bartleby, the confidence man is also accused of being "'a queer sort of chap"' (*C-M*, 113), and in a similar way he sets the tempo of his narrative without therefore centering it. With extremely few exceptions, each chapter of the novel begins with the confidence-man's entrée, usually under a new alias. He "accosts" an interlocutor, with

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[202] For a discussion of "the illness of contagious involuntarism" disseminated by "Bartlebyan passivity," see Peggy Kamuf, "'Bartleby,' or Decision: A Note on Allegory," *To Follow: The Wake of Jacques Derrida*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 33-42.

[203] The Oxford English Dictionary records the first use of "queer the pitch" in Lord Chief Baron's *The Swell's Night Guide; or, a peep through The Great Metropolis*, published in 1846.

[204] Or, alternatively, to proofread his duplicates against the original manuscript. Critics have long insisted on the importance of distinguishing between these two processes.

whom he proceeds to engage in a discursive adagio on themes contiguous to confidence (e.g. love, trust, friendship, loyalty). Almost always, chapters end with the exit or dismissal of one or both speakers. It is a novel of comings and goings, congregation and dispersal, disembarkments and boardings, salutations and farewells, all directed by the confidence man.[205]

Despite its rhetorical obsession with the prerequisites for intimacy (confidence, love, trust, friendship, loyalty, generosity), *The Confidence-Man* traffics exclusively in strangers: in other words, its characters never transcend superficial acquaintance to achieve "codification in friendship, sympathy, or marriage."[206] Instead, they do little more than glide past one another, as the novel's infatuatation with belatedness or near-misses demonstrates. As if to belabor, or chuckle over, the hollowness of the confidence man's interviews—in which little more than monetary capital is exchanged, for the most part reluctantly—the text is frequently punctuated by moments in which one of the confidence-man's dupes asks where an earlier avatar can be found, only to be informed by the confidence-man's current avatar that the latter went ashore at the last landing. The protagonist's elegiac meditations on the theme of fiduciary attachment signal at once its important status within, and absence from, the text:

> 'did you never observe how little, very little, confidence there is? I mean between man and man—more particularly between stranger and stranger. In a sad world it is the saddest fact. Confidence! I have sometimes almost thought that confidence is fled; that confidence is the new Astrea—emigrated—vanished—gone.' (*C-M*, 36)

What little ingenuous connection occurs in *The Confidence-Man* is ad hoc and impromptu at best, at worst spurious or hastily revoked—as when the sick miser calls the confidence-man

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[205] I think it is worth pointing out, however provisionally here, that critics have not yet addressed the balletic features of *The Confidence Man*, despite the historical tie between the tradition of masquerade—especially as it was practiced during the Italian Renaissance by Venetian, Milanese, and Florentine nobility—and the intricate system of concert dance techniques cultivated in the French court of Louis XIV. For a history of ballet, see Jennifer Homans, *Apollo's Angels: A History of Ballet*, (New York: Random House, 2010).

[206] Gage Mcweeny, "The Sociology of the Novel: George Eliot's Strangers," *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction* (Fall 2009), 538-545, 541.

back, in vain, to legitimate the former's investment with a receipt, or when Charlie Noble backs out of his freshly-forged friendship with Frank Goodman (the Cosmopolitan) because the latter has had the audacity to ask him for financial assistance. *The Confidence-Man* is a novel of endless reprising, of potentially infinite extension rather than teleological intension.

3.6 Vague Reports: Narratorial Modesties in *Bartleby* and *The Confidence-Man*

It is not immediately apparent that the narrative voices of *Bartleby* and *The Confidence-Man* may share attributes in common, since the former is first-person, whereas the latter is (nominally, if strangely) omniscient. Perspectivally, however, if not rhetorically,[207] the two narrators overlap, and often merge, in their modesty and demurral. The humility and self-doubt of the narrator's final gesture as master of narrative ceremonies attenuates the force of his earlier bombast. The Latinate diction of the opening paragraphs ("divers histories," "ere," "employées," "imprimis"), his pretentious name-dropping ("I was not unemployed in my profession by the late John Jacob Astor; a name, which, I admit, I love to repeat, for it hath a rounded and orbicular sound to it, and rings like unto bullion"), and the frivolity of his final declaration have all long made him the brunt of derision. But the self-deprecation of his ultimate recusal temper his pomposity, grandiloquence, and sententiousness Having so scrupulously set the scene for Bartleby—maneuvering the lesser dramatis personae (Turkey, Nippers, Ginger Nut, even himself) into their respective positions "ere

[207] Paul Brodtkorb, Jr., speaking about Ishmael in *Moby-Dick*, reminds us that "the rhetorical basis of a first-person narrator that includes its narrator as a character is usually a variety of *apologia pro vita sua*. Because such a narrator manages more or less to justify himself in the process of evaluating his choices, acts, and involvements, he makes a specific claim on the reader's consideration. Sometimes the claim approaches an appeal for forgiveness; sometimes it is merely for as much understanding as is implicit in that desire to reveal himself which the narrator's completed book makes actual." See *Ishmael's White World: A Phenomenological Reading of Moby Dick*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965).

introducing" the hero—he must ultimately admit the miscarriage, or fatuity, of his attempts to offer "an adequate understanding of the chief character" (*B*, 4).

In "divulging one little item of rumor" (*B*, 34)—Bartleby's previous term as a "subordinate clerk in the Dead Letter Office in Washington" (*B*, 34)—the narrator seeks to address, if he cannot alleviate, the reader's ungratified curiosity, in which he "fully share[s]" (*B*, 34). This "sequel" (*B*, 4)—which is in fact a prequel—does not exonerate the narrator, but it does constitute a kind (of) restitution. Bartleby "had been suddenly removed" from the DLO due to an administrative re-shuffle, and the narrator's final deed (he who specializes in them) is to return his clerk to his previous workplace, as though within the walls of the lawyer's own Wall Street chambers Bartleby had the stature of a dead letter, incapable of being understood in terms of intention.[208] Imaginatively (re)placed in the DLO, Bartleby freely handles everything, from the recipient-less missives he "assort[s]…for the flames" to the "ring" or "bank-note" he mournfully fingers in the stead of those "who died stifled by unrelieved calamities" (*B*, 34). Despite the narrator's distress over this rumor—"I cannot adequately express the emotions which seize me" (*B*, 34)—a sense of belonging and ease suffuses this glance onto Bartleby performing his DLO duties. Nothing hustles him; time is moot. Nor do reading and writing exhaust him. He acquits himself unselfconsciously of his tasks and a soothing harmony grounds him in his work. The sliver of illumination thrown by this "vague report" reveals more about his temperament, his predilections, his *character* than the preceding thirty pages. Here, at last, he is not out of place, despite being deracinated from the putative scene of his centrality.

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[208] Not only in the sense of having nowhere to go, but in the sense of originating outside of the author's intention.

With remarkably few exceptions, the point-of-view from which *The Confidence-Man* is recounted hardly provides more insight into, or speaks with greater authority about, the inner thoughts, motivations, or feelings of characters within the text than the lawyer shows himself equipped to furnish with regard to Bartleby. Free indirect discourse is entirely absent from *The Confidence-Man*: on the relatively few occasions that interiority is treated, it is a matter of conjecture and hypothesis rather than disclosure. Subjectivity is intimated rather than expounded, hinted at rather than divulged: the reader infers, or gathers, from dialogue, action, and gesture the cognitive or affective states of various characters. Moreover, the promiscuity of point-of-view in *The Confidence-Man* suggests a cavalier-ness or indifference to perspective: at several memorable points, the dominant point-of-view loans itself out to, or is wholly co-opted by, another. Thus, *The Confidence-Man* is a *mise-en-abime* of stories-within-stories: the tales of China Aster, of Indian-Hating, or of Goneril (the masochistic wife of the ill-starred man with the weed) all usurp or colonize the narrative, not just waylaying it (whatever that might mean in a narrative whose underlying structure is repeating), but imposing on it an entirely new voice. A man "who, with the bluff *abord* of the West" (*C-M*, 144), buttonholes the confidence-man and regales him with the life of a certain Colonel Moredock, alleged "'Indian Hater of Illinois'" (*C-M*,146), does so not in his own words but in those of one "'James Hall, the judge,'" wagering that: "'I, having an…impressible memory, think that, upon a pinch, I can render you the judge upon the colonel almost word for word'" (*C-M*, 148).

Critics have long pointed out that *The Confidence-Man*'s slippery protagonist contravenes realism by exhibiting no psychological or moral depth: the novel "has seemed to represent the impossibility of one of realism's central goals: to securely locate free and self-defining individuals within a social order by discovering the truth behind their social

masks."[209] In opposition to this line of thinking, Rachel Cole argues that the protagonist "has the structure of identity if not the content." At the same time, "he also has something like the structure of interiority" insofar as "external appreciation…constitutes [his] depth," and therefore "represents the possibility that personhood might be irreducibly social" (Cole, 386). She goes on to argue that the experience of reading *The Confidence-Man* is less disorienting than one would expect because the protagonist's composure—his resistance to the *dis*composition and erasure that threaten him at multiple points when he nearly fades into or gets eclipsed by another character—permits the reader to identify him consistently across a broad range of avatars. Yet it seems that, despite *The Confidence-Man*'s overall insistence on the arbitrariness or triviality of perspective,[210] the protagonist is held together not by his own composure but rather by meticulously composing those with whom he interacts. Thus, he reliably recalls himself to the reader as a function of anticipating and manipulating his interlocutors. His fore- and hind-sight, which amount to something like a temporal grasp of the narrative, count as a perspective (an epistemological edge) exclusive to him, by which he can always be singled out even in his profusion.

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In the novel's final scene, an urchin hawking "travelers' conveniences" (*C-M*, 243) approaches the confidence-man, who is involved in a conversation about exegesis with a gentleman farmer. The boy succeeds in selling a patent-lock and money-belt to the latter, adding a pamphlet entitled "'*Counterfeit Detector*'" as a gratuity. This pamphlet turns out to be an instruction manual for identifying fake currency, which was widely diffuse in the poorly-

[209] Rachel Cole, "At the Limits of Identity: Realism and American Personhood in Melville's *Confidence-Man*," *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction*, Volume 39, No. 3 (Summer 2006), 384-401. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text.

[210] Chapter 39 ("The Hypothetical Friends"), in particular, in which the confidence man "pretends" to be himself and the disciple acts the "role" of Charlie Noble, plays on the flexibility and elasticity of perspective.

regulated antebellum economy. Rather than lend certainty to determinations of creditworthiness, however, the manual only proliferates sources of doubt and confusion by giving "'so many marks of all sorts to go by'" (*C-M*, 247). One criterion for establishing fraudulence is whether there is "'in one corner, mixed in with the vignette, the figure of a goose, very small, indeed, all but microscopic; and, for added precaution,…not observable, even if magnified, unless the attention is directed to it'" (*C-M*, 248). The confidence-man indicates the location of this image with his finger, but it remains invisible to the farmer, who asks, "'is it a real goose?'" To which the confidence-man replies, "'a perfect goose; beautiful goose'" (*C-M*, 248).

This substitution of an aesthetic emphasis for an ontological one—whereby a concern about being (is it a goose?) is gently displaced by an affirmation of beauty (a perfect goose)—functions as a commentary on the larger "wild goose chase" at stake in the text: that which pertains to the confidence-man himself. If *The Confidence-Man* compels its reader to chase down the protagonist, the rewards of that chase resist easy summation. The novel agitates against the "economy of character" standardized during the Romantic era, in which "round" characterization became synchronous with ethical payoffs for the reader. By decoupling the Austenian combination of the refusal to "be known at first sight" and signification "beneath or beyond the face of the page" (*EC*, 1), it insists that difficulty might yield rewards other than interiority and depth.

3.7. Fairy-land's Fidelities

Melville dedicated his last novel to "the victims of Auto da Fé," and it seems significant that it is therefore itself a species of dead letter, intended for those who perished during the Inquisition(s). Auto-da-fé, meaning "act of faith," was the ritual of public

penance during which sentences were meted out to condemned heretics and apostates, and the term was often used synonymously with being burnt at the stake (the most severe of the punishments handed down by the tribunals). That Melville consecrates his novel to those who have lost their lives to an "act of faith," and names the ship on which it is set "Fidèle," suggests that he understood himself as both engaged in an act of faith and beholden to those who had suffered one. If the expedition to "fairy-land" is one that can only be undertaken "with faith," its discovery inflicts a wound. The source of the hurt is ambiguous, but it has to do with some unutterable compunction toward the beings one stumbles upon there, the originals going about their business. Having been, one doesn't go back: the narrator of *Bartleby* "waives the biographies of all other scriveners" in order to attempt "a few passages in the life of…the strangest [he] ever saw or heard of" (*B*, 4), and nothing more follows of *The Confidence-Man*, nor—for the remaining three (plus) decades of Melville's life—of any other novel.[211]

Melville continued to think about the confidence man during his many months of international travel in the immediate aftermath of its completion.[212] But upon his homecoming, in need of steady income, he joined the lecture circuit, climbing onstage himself to speak in monotones about sculpted marble.[213] His skills as an orator were mediocre at best, and across the country his public speaking was largely dubbed a fiasco; but he persevered, despite ill health and paltry profits, finding some sustenance in these musings on stone, however awkward their delivery—which was often, by all accounts, painfully so. Moreover, Melville openly disclaimed any expertise or proficiency in his subject matter; he

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[211] He composed *Billy Budd* during these decades but did not finish it and may, indeed, have never intended it for publication.
[212] See Jay Leyda, *The Melville Log: Vol. 1*, (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1951).
[213] See the second volume of Hershel Parker, *Herman Melville: A Biography,* (Baltimore: JHU Press, 2002), which covers the last four decades of Melville's life. Chapter 16 addresses his lecturing in detail.

proclaimed himself, in his prefatory remarks, "'one who looks upon works of art as he would a violet or a cloud.'"[214] Unlike originals, the busts and statues with which Melville had stood "face to face" in Rome are the antithesis of aloof or abstract: they are a "present existence" whom we "learn…as we do living men." They do not "ray out," but rather draw in, "greeting" rather than rebuffing those who gaze on them. It is little wonder that Melville—having so shortly before spent so much time with characters who recoil at (narratorial) approach, "shyly starting" ("P," 216), retiring into a "hermitage" (*B*, 17), or "courting oblivion" (*C-M*, 9)—finds this welcome so intoxicating.

[214] Cited from Christopher Sten, "Melville and the Visual Arts: An Overview," *Savage Eye: Melville and the Visual Arts* (London: University Press, 1991), 1-40, 1.

{"The all-in-all for our Attention" : The Burdens of Centrality in *The Portrait of a Lady*}

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Henry James's Preface to *The Portrait of a Lady*, like all of those that he wrote for the novels selected for inclusion in the 1908 New York Edition, is an act of retrieval[215] that is itself ushered in by the recollection of a peculiar improvidence. The author remembers his optimism, as he gazed out the window of his rented rooms on the Riva Schiavoni in the spring of 1880, that Venice's demands on his attention might be turned to creative profit:

> the waterside life, the wondrous lagoon spread before me, and the ceaseless human chatter of Venice came in at my windows, to which I seem to myself to have been constantly driven, in the fruitless fidget of composition, as if to see whether, out in the blue channel, the ship of some right suggestion, of some happy phrase, of the next happy twist of my subject, the next true touch for my canvas, mightn't come into sight.[216]

In retrospect, however, this expenditure of observation must be counted as profligacy, since "romantic and historic sites, such as the land of Italy abounds in, offer the artist a questionable aid to concentration when they themselves are not to be the subject of it" (*AN*, 41). The city's largesse, however extravagant, is ultimately a distraction *in spite of* which the novel emerges; the inscription of its gifts is so covert that it is detectable only to the author himself: "there are pages of the book which, in the reading over, have seemed to make me see again the bristling curve of the wide Riva, the large colour-spots of the balconied houses and the repeated undulation of the little hunchbacked bridges" (*AN*, 41). This emphasis on the novel's out-of-place-ness—its lack of correspondence with the geographic milieu in

[215] The Prefaces are all tasked with harvesting the "données," "germs," or "seeds" from which his novels evolved.
[216] Henry James, *The Art of the Novel*, (London: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1962), 41. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text.

which the labor of composition occurred—at first seems irrelevant to the remarks that follow, which offer a positivist account of James's artistic process.

By highlighting Venice's negative imprint on *The Portrait of a Lady*, James invites the reader to consider what it means for a text's site of composition to be out of sync with, even hostile to, its diegesis. His arresting rhetorical question—"how can places that speak in general so to the imagination not give it, at the moment, the particular thing it wants?"—posits the correlation between the actual milieu in which a *discours* is produced and the imagined locales in which the *histoire* unfolds as symbiotic rather than adventitious.[217] It is worth noting, however, that James's cartographic preoccupation with place (literally, where on the map writing happens) is accompanied by the narratological pressure he puts on place as a structural feature of *histoire*: emplotment functions as a form of location, or a mechanism by which the subject is eventually "place[d]…right" (*AN*, 48), and James regularly uses it as a synonym for "situation" in the Prefaces. *Discours* is also spatially configured: in a famous metaphor James likens the novel to a "square and spacious house" (*AN*,48). In the pages that follow, I suggest that James's deliberate emphasis on the protagonist's correct or felicitous placement begs the question of whether [s]he could be positioned awry or askance, what such obliquity might look like, and what its consequences are.

[217] This symbiosis was clearly intriguing to James and he recurs to it throughout the Prefaces. Whereas Italian cities (Florence, Venice) tend to be associated with failed attempts at encryption or with the taxing labor of ignoring one's surroundings, the British and French capitals are almost always described as abetting the creative acts that occur under their auspices. James tell us, for example, that the "resurrection" of his "idea" for *The American* "took place in Paris…; my good fortune being apparently that Paris had ever so promptly offered me…everything that was needed to make my conception concrete." (*AN*, 23). *The Princess Casamassima* "proceeded quite directly…from the habit and the interest of walking the streets" of London (*AN*, 59), and the "seed" of *The Awkward Age*—likewise—"sprouted in that vast nursery of sharp appeals and concrete images which calls itself, for blest convenience, London" (*AN*, 99).

In this chapter I argue that, far from felicitously "placing" Isabel Archer, plot has a skewed or off-kilter relationship to the protagonist in *The Portrait of a Lady*.[218] That is, James constructs Isabel's subjectivity (her feeling, apperception, and psychological depth) *to the side of* narrative events, and the exfoliations whose synthesis constitutes the effect of fictional consciousness produce, in this novel, a mind at odds with, or oddly aloof from, the events and relationships that are presumed to shape it.[219] While James's contribution to the history of the novel has traditionally been construed in terms of his granular representations of individual persons, and the lavish interiorization—indeed, veneration—of what he calls "centers of consciousness," I argue in the following pages that a phenomenology of character who will have nothing do with its narrative[220] enhances our understanding not only of Isabel, *The Portrait of a Lady*, and the longer arc of James's career, but of the nineteenth-century novel more broadly and, especially, the arrangement of what Alex Woloch calls its "character-space."

My argument proceeds in three principal stages designed to investigate, in a prismatic and nested fashion rather than a strictly linear one, an overarching inquiry into

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[218] My notion of Isabel's slanted or skewed situation within the text is informed by a number of exciting queer readings of *The Portrait of a Lady*, from which my own has benefited. Melissa Solomon in particular makes a convincing case that *The Portrait of a Lady* hoodwinks its reader into privileging Isabel's relationship with Osmond over the "governing but displaced lesbian interests" that in fact preside over the novel: "'romance,' of any kind…is possible the least interesting facet of *The Portrait of a Lady*. The stakes of the novel are somewhere far left of that center, and nowhere does complication, interest, or even a sense of vitality come into microscopic focus from anybody being 'in love.' The expendability of romance in this Victorian novel about a young, beautiful, wealthy, eligible, desirable girl is, itself, one signal that whatever you think matters about the plot of Isabel's courtship, marriage, and married life literally complicates itself out of existence as one subject and reemerges as another." While I ascribe less importance to Isabel's friendship with Mme. Merle—or, rather, find it important with respect to Isabel's ultimate recusal from the adjudicative prerogatives that obtain to such intimacy—I agree with Solomon's basic point about how *The Portrait of a Lady* has a way of seducing its reader into believing that its periphery is in fact its center. See also Dana Luciano, "Invalid Relations: Queer Kinship in Henry James's *The Portrait of a Lady*." *The Henry James Review* 23.2 (2002), 196-217.

[219] I am indebted to Sharon Cameron's rigorous close readings of the Prefaces in *Thinking in Henry James* for the insight that undergirds this claim, namely "how the Prefaces *describe* the novel's consciousness and, more to the point, 'where' they locate it differ from how the novel *represents* the same consciousness." See Sharon Cameron, *Thinking in Henry James*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

[220] This is a phenomenology that builds on, even as it departs from, Anne-Lise François's theory of characters who do nothing, or whose "recessive" actions efface themselves in the course of their acquittal. See Anne-Lise François, *Open Secrets: The Literature of Uncounted Experience*, (Stanford: SUP, 2008).

characterization that is irreducible to psychological illumination or embodiment.[221] First, I show that the attention bestowed on Isabel by and within the novel manifests itself as a problem within the diegetic and mimetic world of the text. Her meta-fictional attunements—and those of other characters on her behalf—along with her wish to evade scrutiny or interpersonal contact culminate in a disquieting ontology that haunts the novel, lending a certain prurience to its enterprise (to which the reader is inevitably accessory). Secondly, I offer an explanation of Isabel's elliptical relationship to plot, demonstrating that her dissociation from plot, and from those who administer it, attenuates the prestige this convention typically enjoys as what Peter Brooks calls "the organizing line and intention of narrative" and the "form of desire" that motivates the reader "forward, onward, through the text" (*RP*, 3). *The Portrait of a Lady* is propelled more by Isabel's *in*curiosity about and demurral from the episteme of the novel than with the satiation of her curiosity about the wider world, or about knowledge relevant to her circumstances, [222] and this renders her development irreducible to Bildung, in which the process of education or maturation corresponds to narrative events.[223] Finally, I trace a coherent topography of furtive and transitional spaces that has been largely neglected by secondary literature addressing spatial and architectural imagery in the novel. This topography, and Isabel's navigation of it, are, I argue, instrumental to a portrayal that is coextensive with retraction.

Since the 1970s, scholarship dedicated to recuperating James as an incisive (and sweeping) social and ideological critic has proliferated. The field of revisionist work most

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[221] We might think of this type of characterization as para-Platonic, given its antipathy to (poetic) representation as defined in *The Symposium*.

[222] See Hilary Schor, *Curious Subjects: Women and the Trials of Realism*, (Oxford: OUP, 2013). Schor argues compellingly that while "realism in the novel has traditionally been allied not so much with knowledge as with stuff, with the world of material objects," tangible things are in fact tangential to the genre: "if we strip the novel bare of material culture, layettes and epics and the flora of Lapland, we are left instead with the heroine's imagination, testing itself against the world, trying to know something outside itself" (2-3).

[223] See Franco Moretti, *The Way of the World: The Bildungsroman in European Culture*, (London: Verso, 1987).

pertinent to my own is that which addresses the question of women in Henry James's fiction and, by extension, his participation in coeval debates over female suffrage and emancipation and (*avant la lettre*) in those germane to twentieth- and twenty-first century feminism(s).[224] By proposing a new way of conceiving the interaction between plot and protagonist in *The Portrait of a Lady*, my reading of the novel weaves together a traditional formalist approach—one partial to the James who, as a consummate artisan, was in thrall to the intricacies of novelistic craftsmanship and the ontology of literary character—with a sensitivity to the ramifications of the feminine (or effeminate) ethos of his work. Whether he is seen as a proto-feminist[225] or a chauvinist,[226] it is more or less agreed upon that James's plots are "largely and undeniably about women's victimization,"[227] with *The Portrait of a Lady*'s standing out for its brutality. While this brutality has been interpreted as symptomatic of both the novel's realism[228] and of James's systemic predilection for sabotaging his female protagonists,[229] I argue in this chapter that the problem of gender in the novel (though not entirely incidental) is subsidiary to its generic and structural lines of inquiry. In my reading, then, the text's assignment of attention and the protagonist's volition to avoid or evacuate centrality loom larger than female oppression and misogynistic voyeurism.

Isabel Archer does not emerge so much as she retracts and grows fainter over the course of *The Portrait of a Lady*. Despite ranking among the most unequivocally central of

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[224] I am indebted to Donatello Izzo's masterful excursus of this field and to her exhaustive bibliography. See *Portraying the Lady: Technologies of Gender in the Short Stories of Henry James*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001).

[225] See, for example, Judith Fetterley, *The Resisting Reader*; Johns Carlos Rowe; *The Other Henry James*; Carren Kaston. *Imagination and Desire in the Novels of Henry James*; Joyce W. Warren, *The American Narcissus: Individualism and Women in Nineteenth-Century American Fiction*; and Nina Auerbach. *Communities of Women*.

[226] For an account of the "male authoritarianism of James's narratives," see Alfred Habegger, *Henry James and the "Woman Business*," (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 26.

[227] Donatello Izzo, "The Manifold Arts of Re-vision," *Portraying the Lady: Technologies of Gender in the Short Stories of Henry James*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), 9.

[228] See, in particular, Virginia C. Fowler, "'Solutions' to 'the practical problem of life' : *The Portrait of a Lady*," *Henry James's American Girl: The Embroidery on the Canvas*, (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1984), 64-82.

[229] See Habegger.

James's protagonists, she is renowned for her contraction as the story progresses, and critical accounts of how her volitional excess or over-exuberance winnows over the course of the narrative abound. In the overwhelming majority of these accounts, however, other forms of depth and enlargement—whether ethical, aesthetic, psychological, or emotional—ultimately compensate for this winnowing: Isabel ceases to care about experience, adventure, or sensation for their own sakes but she comes to care profoundly for duty, responsibility, and marriage as a sacred bond or an official institution. Isabel's renunciations of freedom, happiness, and youthful enthusiasm are offset by her acquiescence to limitations and necessities that she finally finds more fulfilling and worthwhile.[230] I argue in this chapter, however, that Isabel withdraws not only from the sensualities of lived experience,[231] but from the positions that plot prescribes. Like one of Anne-Lise François's "figures of emptihandedness," who shun temptations to "'turn…to profit or good account'…their experience of the world, others, or themselves" (Francois, 21), Isabel is best understood outside of critical paradigms that see her trajectory in meliorist terms.

James's contribution to the history of the novel is traditionally construed in terms of his refinement and embellishment of both "moralism and perspectivalism."[232] Whether seen as a "melodramatist" or "a novelist of consciousness" (Kurnick, 144), James's oeuvre is valued for the intensity of its moral oppositions and its refined representations of

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[230] See, for example, Jonathan Freedman, *Professions of Taste: Henry James, British Aestheticism, and Commodity Culture*, (Stanford: SUP, 1993), for an account of how Isabel is conscripted into "participation in the human community" by the end of the novel. See also Dorothea Krook *The Ordeal of Consciousness in Henry James*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962); J.A. Ward, *The Search for Form: Studies in the Structure of James's Fiction*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1967); Tony Tanner, "The Fearful Self," *Twentieth-Century Interpretations of The Portrait of a Lady*, Ed. Peter Buitenhuis, (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1968), 67-82; Dorothy Berkson, "Why Does She Marry Osmond? The Education of Isabel Archer," *American Transcendental Quarterly* 60 (1986). 53-71; and Patrick Fessenbecker, "Freedom, Self-Obligation, and Selfhood in Henry James," *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 66.1 (2011), 69-95.

[231] Criticism of *The Portrait of a Lady* has tended, not without good reason, to emphasize that the curtailment of Isabel's unlimited opportunity ends in a materially and affectively ascetic but (more) spiritually liberated existence.

[232] David Kurnick, *Empty Houses: Theatrical Failure and the Novel*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 144. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text.

personhood. Moreover, his legacy continues to be thought about, for the most part, in terms of the aggrandizement and ornateness of discrete characters: his extension of the novel's capacity to represent the perspicacity of individualized consciousness and emotion. In other words, the critical consensus that James is "primarily…a writer of individuals" (Kurnick, 144) holds fast, and his lavish interiorization—indeed, veneration—of what he calls "centers of consciousness" have become canonical to how we articulate his impact on the shape and agenda of the novel.

While the critical consensus that James is "primarily…a writer of individuals" is slowly eroding, his legacy continues to be overwhelmingly articulated in terms of discrete characters, and he is credited above all with extending and refining the novel's capacity to represent individualized consciousness and emotion. Nevertheless, in this chapter, I join a growing chorus of revisionist inquiry into Jamesian character led by scholars such as David Kurnick, Kevin Ohi, and Omri Moses. Whereas Kurnick, Ohi, and Moses have focused, respectively, on James's commitment to collective or permeable forms of consciousness (*Empty Houses*), on his elevation of style into a locus of consciousness or agency (*Henry James and the Queerness of Style*), and on his use of vitalist principles to fashion a more supple paradigm of selfhood (*Out of Character: Modernism, Vitalism, Psychic Life*), I keep my focus on character as a unique, bounded sentience. I argue that the signature of the protagonist in *The Portrait of a Lady* is her evasion of scrutiny and that this evasion (re)defines centrality within the novel as a minor, as opposed to major, space—one that is restively inhabited or contiguous to the main events of the narrative. Alongside this aesthetic argument about Isabel's minimization, I build a more provisional ethical one about the pleasures of fitful and withheld access, suggesting that James constructs Isabel Archer's subjectivity (the subtlety of her feeling, the impression of her psychological depth) *to the side of* her narrative placement.

This results in a novel in friction with the twinned rationales of *Bildung* (development, coming of age) and psychological exfoliation (depth, the growth of consciousness).

4.1. "'You're all looking at me; it makes me uncomfortable'" : Minor Centrality in *The Portrait of a Lady*

In *The One v. The Many*, his seminal contribution to the theory of character in the nineteenth-century novel, Alex Woloch proposes a "typology of minorness" composed of "two pervasive extremes" of subordination: "the worker and the eccentric" (Woloch, 25). The former is "the flat character who is reduced to a single functional use" and the latter is "the fragmentary character who plays a disruptive, oppositional role within the plot." The minor character's industrious avatar is "smoothly absorbed or "engulfed" by the narrative, swept up in more dominant plots or consigned to oblivion; its bizarre or goofy one, on the other hand, has a more volatile relationship to the narrative, "grat[ing] against his or her position and…usually, as a consequence, wounded, exiled, expelled, ejected, imprisoned, or killed (within the *discourse*, if not the *story*)" (*OvM*, 25). Whether submerged or explosive, however, the minor character is distinguished by its aptitude for evanescence: its talent for "capturing attention precisely as it departs" and "the tension or relief that results from this vanishing" (*OvM*, 39). According to Woloch, "almost every nineteenth-century novel is informed by the problematics of character-space: both in terms of the particular elaboration of a 'hero' or central protagonist and in the inflection of inevitable (and often numerous) secondary figures" (*OvM*, 33), and Woloch's Marxist model of "distributive attention" has been pivotal to understandings of how character is constructed within the context of the nineteenth-century novel.

Yet Woloch's meticulous investigation into the ways in which characters jockey for position within a crowded field, while justly influential, doesn't fully account for the ways in which centrality can be tenuous in the absence of competition, or appear to dwindle even within a thin character field that leaves it uncontested. Further, despite the thoroughness of his taxonomy, Woloch neglects some of the ways in which the narrative's uneven distribution of attention, what he calls "asymmetry," can be awkward for characters *within* the story, rather than simply imposed *by* or negotiated *at* the level of discourse.

While the Preface declares Isabel the "all-in-all for our attention" (*AN*, 51), in fact the text is animated by the deflection and delusion of the attentions it directs toward her, and the difficulty of seeing Isabel clearly or protractedly belies the ekphrastic ambitions enunciated by the book's title. David Kurnick speaks eloquently about what he calls the "distinctive ontology of Jamesian character[s]," which resides in a thespian-like intelligence regarding "whatever role they occupy in the story," allowing them to "retain an extradiegetic consciousness of themselves as engaged in precisely those roles and thus in a larger fictional project" (Kurnick, 147). While Kurnick limits his analysis of "theatrical topography" to James's turn-of-the-century fiction (1890s), an interest in *mise-en-scene* animates James's earlier work as well. In *The Portrait of a Lady*, James imbues his protagonist with an "extradiegetic consciousness" that is anxious about or discomfited by its own dominance within the text. Thus, an acute tension arises in the novel between Isabel's spatial allocation within the discourse (that it, the number of pages devoted to her) and her aspirational marginality within the story. Even as the reader is urged to take her centrality for granted, Isabel's ambivalence about being spotlit is registered rhetorically, structurally, and tropologically. As I will show in the following pages, the protagonist of *The Portrait of a Lady* consolidates at the

vanishing point of prominence (discourse) and elsewhere-ness or in-between-ness (story), manifesting what I call minor centrality.[233]

Written when James was thirty-two and widely acclaimed as his first masterpiece, *The Portrait of a Lady* tells the story of Isabel Archer, a lively young American woman who—upon the death of her father, which leaves her orphaned—is whisked off to Europe by her father's sister, Lydia Touchett. Arriving at Gardencourt, the English country estate belonging to her aunt and uncle (Daniel Touchett), she meets for the first time her cousin Ralph, who, like his father, is terminally ill with consumption. In England she receives two proposals of marriage in quick succession—the first from a member of the landed aristocracy, Lord Warburton, a new acquaintance, and the second from a long-standing American suitor, Caspar Goodwood, whose family own a cotton factory in Massachusetts. She rebuffs both, and Ralph is inspired to persuade his dying father to give Isabel half of the inheritance the latter would have left entirely to Ralph. Thus, Isabel is unwittingly made an heiress and becomes the target of a widowed older woman, Madame Merle and her former lover, Gilbert Osmond, who are intent on securing a dowry and an advantageous match for their illegitimate daughter, Pansy, whom Madame Merle has never recognized as her own. To the surprise, and dismay, of everyone else, Isabel marries Osmond, and the remaining two-thirds of the novel deal with the misfortune of that choice.

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[233] Scholars have long been attuned to the metafictional vexations of plot and characterhood in *The Portrait of a Lady*, and my argument about Isabel's minor centrality takes its cue, in many respects, from work by Millicent Bell, Nina Auerbach, and Joettkandt, each of whom takes seriously the novel's interest in its own modes of expropriation and exploitation, which run parallel to those for which Merle, Osmond, and even Ralph are finally indicted. See in particular Millicent Bell, "Isabel Archer and the Affronting of Plot," *The Portrait of a Lady: Norton Critical Edition*, Ed. Robert D. Bamberg, (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1995), 748-783, for a persuasive account of how—despite being "a character in search of its plot"—Isabel is threatened by the exigencies of the dramatic arc, which stifle the potentiality in which she thrives; Nina Auerbach, "Alluring Vacancies in the Victorian Character," which addresses Isabel's skittishness about being the object of representation; and Sigi Joettkandt, *Acting Beautifully: Henry James and the Ethical Aesthetic*, which argues elegantly that Isabel escapes the teleological insistence—and even aggression—of the *Bildungsroman*.

There is never any doubt about whose story *The Portrait of a Lady* tells—to whom, in other words, the "lady" of the title refers. As Melissa Solomon puts it, "one sees how immediately and totally the energies of this text turn toward Isabel the minute she enters" (Solomon, 447), and she remains throughout the lodestar around which James constellates a coterie of subordinates.[234] Unlike the fictions of James's late phase, *The Portrait of a Lady* is not busy with "dual (and sometimes dueling) protagonists," nor with a "series of potential protagonists," as is standard in multi-plot novels such as Balzac's *Père Goriot* or Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* (*OvM*, 245). Isabel's centrality, in other words, is not "relative," to borrow Woloch's term; rather, next to the polycentrism of *The Ambassadors*, *The Wings of the Dove*, or *The Golden Bowl*, it is decidedly pronounced. In these later novels, the reader continually ricochets between Lambert Strether and Chad Newsome, Kate Croy and Milly Theale, Maggie Verver and Charlotte Stant, whereas *The Portrait of a Lady* does not oblige its readers to divide their attentions or sympathies in any sustained way.[235]

If its singular protagonist means that *The Portrait of a Lady* lacks a "stratified character-field," however, the novel is no less concerned with "call[ing] attention to the distribution of attention" (*OvM*, 13). On the contrary, its excessive attention to Isabel is a source of constant agitation, and misgivings about the exclusivity of this focus puncture the diegesis at several key moments. Isabel is captivating and charismatic within the world of her text, neither a "weak" protagonist—what Woloch calls those whose centrality is encroached upon by compelling minor characters—nor an inconspicuous or diffident one, as are some of the female protagonists (Fanny Price, Lucy Snowe, Jane Eyre) who have been

[234] James writes of these minor characters: "it was as if they had simply, by an impulse of their own, floated into my ken, and all in response to my primary question: 'Well, what will she *do*?' Their answer seemed to be that if I would trust them, they would show me; on which, with an urgent appeal to them to make it at least as interesting as they could, I trusted them" (*AN*, 53).

[235] It might be argued that the tragedy of Mme. Merle rises to a degree of pathos that rivals Isabel's, but the latter retains a paramount stature within the novel and no other character's exploits substantially encroach on her own.

of interest, for precisely these traits, to feminist critiques of Victorian representations of womanhood.[236] But her fascination to others is a source of ambivalence: although she "couldn't help being aware" that "she herself was a character" (*PL*, 94),[237] Isabel deprecates the kind of reading that thrives on the sensation of vicariousness that largely fuels the authorship and popular consumption of novels. Distressed by Ralph's confession that he "'had amused himself with planning out a high destiny for [her]'" (*PL*, 291), Isabel chastens him: "'you say you amused yourself with a project for my career—I don't understand that…Don't amuse yourself too much, or I shall think you're doing it at my expense'" (291). In thus forbidding Ralph to interest himself in her adventures, she implicitly establishes her ontological superiority over characters from whose careers a reader may derive amusement, implicitly denigrating the satisfactions and rewards of novel-reading.[238] Early in the novel,

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[236] See, for example, Mary Poovey. *Uneven Developments: The Ideological Work of Gender in Mid-Victorian England*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988); Nancy Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel*, (Oxford: OUP, 1990); Lorna Ellis, *Appearing to Diminish: Female Development and the British Bildungsroman, 1750-1850*, (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1999). In *The Economy of Character*, Lynch suggests that such characters—"seemingly self-effacing,…modest-looking, plainly dressed,…*look*[*ing*] as though [they] were fast dwindling into invisibility and insignificance"—are paradoxically entrusted, during the romantic era, with embodying the "rounded character['s] promise [of] a fund of meanings, one infinitely generative of second looks and speculation" (*EC*, 154.).

[237] The vacillating status of character within Isabel's lexicon as a term with both literary and moral valence is one of the most perplexing aspects of the novel, as critics like Bell, Paul Seabright, and Martha Nussbaum have noted. Her "awareness" of *being* a character (in the literary sense) blends seamlessly into her concerns about *vitiating* or *dishonoring* her character (in the moral one). In the first half of the novel, Ralph cautions Isabel against a vigilant stance toward character: "'Don't try so much to form [it]…Live as you like best, and [it] will take care of itself'" (*PL*, 192), he advises; when Henrietta warns Isabel that she must leave Osmond before he degrades her "'character,'" employing this term as a proxy for rectitude, Isabel assures her friend that she needn't worry: "'It won't get spoiled,' Isabel answered, smiling. 'I'm taking very good care of it'" (*PL*, 418).

[238] It is worth noting here that although the reader is told that "the prose of George Eliot" was among the many advantages of Isabel's upbringing, and is led to assume that her childhood was frequently punctuated by protracted episodes of novel reading, Isabel herself is never portrayed within its pages as fully absorbed in another narrative universe. Moreover, her preference for philosophy over fiction suggests that she is little susceptible to enticement by the forms of sympathy and identification that the novel privileges. Though Isabel prizes "imagination," often used as a synonym for empathy, she is seldom seen cultivating this capacity in herself by observing the world through the eyes of an imaginary Other (see Rachel Ablow, "The Feeling of Reading," *The Feeling of Reading: Affective Experience and Victorian Literature*). The kind of encounter the novel offers holds little appeal for Isabel herself, who is not only a poor metaphorical reader but literally a frustrated reader of texts. While critics have attended at length to her reading habits, which they tend to see as bearing causally on her lapses of perception vis-à-vis Merle and Osmond, comparatively little acknowledgement has been made of how Isabel's intermittent, lackadaisical, and capricious reading enacts (toward literature) the disinterest she treasures on the part of others. Scenes of mise-en-abîme—in which Isabel's immersion in a

Henrietta Stackpole earnestly reminds Ralph that, unlike "'imaginary characters,'" Isabel is "'intensely real.'" (*PL*, 109). In stressing Isabel's empirical actuality, this statement paradoxically foregrounds her ontological inferiority vis-à-vis the reader—an aspect of literary character that novels typically strive to keep at the periphery of readers' attention.[239] This diegetic alertness to Isabel's character-hood, both on her own part and on that of others, seems to complicate her ontological status and makes the novel's act of watching her, in which the reader is inevitably complicit, unusually fraught. As Isabel puts it toward the end of the novel, entreating her friend Henrietta Stackpole to leave Rome with Ralph and Caspar: "'You're all looking at me; it makes me uncomfortable'" (*PL*, X).

By constructing Isabel in such a way as to expose (as troubling) the very exposures whose accumulation constitutes her construction, James produces a protagonist oddly aslant, or queerly situated, within her narrative. In the pages that follow, I hope to demonstrate that this has to do with the novel's unique chronological position within the longer trajectory of James's career and also, more importantly, that it has larger implications for understanding James's intervention in the aesthetics and ethics of the novel broadly conceived. Specifically, it bears on what Alex Woloch calls the "character-space" of the novel's nineteenth-century iteration. Isabel Archer is extraordinary and striking within the world of her text; yet her charisma is rebarbative, in that the attention she elicits is often unwelcome and left ungratified.

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book replicates the reader's own—are both rare and prone to interruption: in one of the novel's last scenes, for example—when she "has as little interest as ever in literature" and "her attention had never been so little at her command" (*PL*, 483)—the novel's heroine feebly applies herself to a book in the library at Gardencourt, only to be sidetracked by the arrival of Lord Warburton's carriage.

[239]For a masterful account of readers' subliminal awareness of the discrepant ontology between imagined and human beings, and how the transparency of fictional evocations of consciousness enable the latency of this awareness, see Catherine Gallagher, "The Rise of Fictionality," *The Novel: Volume 1*, Ed. Franco Moretti, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 336-363.

The Portrait of a Lady is hailed as one of the earliest exemplars of psychological realism for its incandescent penetrations of the protagonist's mind. In the Preface, James explains that—in order to insure that his female protagonist will "matter" independently of any deputies—his strategy consisted of "'plac[ing] the center of the subject in the young woman's own consciousness…Stick to *that*—for the centre" (*AN*, 51). Yet, as Sharon Cameron has argued, "how the Prefaces *describe* the novel's consciousness and, more to the point, 'where' they locate it differ from how the novel *represents* the same consciousness" (Cameron, 36). In arguing that the elaboration of Isabel's consciousness bears an adjacent or off-kilter relation to the events of the narrative itself, I am indebted to Cameron's vigorous close readings of the Prefaces and careful demonstration of the ways in which psychology and consciousness are divorced from or non-identical to one another across James's oeuvre.

The deflection and delusion of the attention that the text directs toward its protagonist are not only produced by, but rhetorically circulated within, the text. Indeed, the difficulty, if not impossibility, of seeing Isabel clearly or protractedly so animates *The Portrait of a Lady* as to belie the painterly or ekphrastic ambitions alluded to by the title. The "portrait" it promises is an instantiation of what Anne-Lise Francois has designated "recessive action"—that which effaces itself in the course of its acquittal. Isabel's presence tapers as the text progresses, gradually becoming *less* distinct, until her final decision to return to Osmond precipitates a full-fledged (literal and figurative) recession.

4.2. Generic Ontologies in Henry James

"I have got (heaven knows!) plenty of gravity within me," James wrote to his brother William in 1879, ruefully admitting that hitherto "modesty and delicacy" had dissuaded him from pursuing "big subjects."[240] In this letter he vows, "the novel I write this next year shall be *big*" (*Letters*, 114, emphasis mine), and allusions to magnitude and diminutiveness, lightness and heft, are scattered not only across his contemporaneous journal entries but (nearly three decades later) across the Preface as well. Isabel is the most consistent beneficiary of these allusions: she is compared, for example, to a "*mere slim* shade" or "*frail* vessel," whose consciousness will be endowed with "the *heaviest* weight" (*AN*, 51, emphases mine).

Whether *The Portrait of a Lady* qualifies as Manichean allegory or fine-grained psychological portraiture has been subject to debate since it attained canonical status in the mid-twentieth century,[241] and in fact the novel is indebted to both modes, joining a taste for the fantastic and mystical with a certain mimetic sobriety and restraint. Frissons of James's romantic imagination (the spectral subplot, for example, in which Isabel will see the "ghost of Gardencourt" if she becomes acquainted with suffering) enliven his adherence to realist conventions (most prominent among them, perhaps, the logic of *Bildung*, with which the realist novel is closely allied). It is hardly surprising that *The Portrait of a Lady* straddles romance and realism, the gothic and the naturalistic, given that the early 1880s were the moment in which James was pivoting away from the macabre romance of *The American*

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[240] *Henry James: A Life in Letters*, Ed. Philip Horne, (New York: Viking, 1999), 114.

[241] For representative examples of the former view, see Dorothy Van Ghent, *The English Novel: Form and Function*, (New York: Harper Collins, 1953); Leslie A. Fiedler, *Love and Death in the American Novel*, (Champaign, IL: Dalkey Archive Press, 1998); F.R. Leavis, *The Great Tradition*, (New York: NYU Press, 1963); and F.O. Matthiessen, *American Renaissance: Art and Expression in the Age of Emerson and Whitman*, (Oxford: OUP, 1968). For commentaries on realism in *The Portrait of a Lady*, or on James's relationship to realism more broadly, see William R. Stowe, *Balzac, James, and the Realistic Novel*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983); Virginia C. Fowler, *Henry James's American Girl: The Embroidery on the Canvas*; Nancy Bentley, "Conscious Observation: Jane Campion's *Portrait of a Lady*," *Henry James Goes to the Movies*, Ed. Susan M. Griffin, (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2002); Peter Brooks, *Realist Vision*; and Victoria Coulson, *Henry James, Women, and Realism*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

(1877) toward the gritty realism of *The Princess Casamassima* (1885) and grappling most mightily with his dual literary inheritance as a Manhattan-born writer of New England heritage whose aesthetic sensibilities had been largely forged during formative years spent in Europe.[242] At the same time, this generic precarity bears on the ontology of character within the text in ways that haven't yet, to my knowledge, received sustained consideration from scholars.

Isabel is in large part defined by her admixture of density and ethereality: within the narrative as well as in the Preface and notebooks, explicit and implicit ascriptions of her substantiality are often counterbalanced by figural and descriptive language testifying to her fey otherworldliness. James's association of aereality and gravity with romance and realism, respectively, is evident in numerous of his writings. Nowhere is it more so, perhaps, than in his 1879 biography of Nathaniel Hawthorne, in which James makes a point of stressing that his forebear was not "enough of"[243] a realist and proceeds to reflect at length on the "delicate" and "subtle conception[s]" of his "miasmatic conscience." James's fear that readers would criticize him for having left Isabel "en l'air,"[244] recalls the rarefication he ascribed to Hawthorne's imaginary people. While the French can give it a patina of affectation or fancifulness, this anxiety about whether his protagonist would be seen as volant is generically grounded.

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[242] For detailed biographical accounts of James's childhood and adolescence and his struggle—during his twenties and early thirties—to come to terms with his debts to Anglo-American writers (mainly Nathaniel Hawthorne and George Eliot) and French or Paris-based writers (Balzac, Flaubert, Turgenev, the Goncourt brothers, Baudelaire, etc.), see: Henry James, *A Small Boy and Others* and *Notes of a Son and Brother* (Charlottesville: UVA Press, 2011); Leon Edel, *Henry James: A Life*, (New York: Harper Collins, 1987); Jean Strouse, *Alice James: A Biography*, (New York: NYRB, 2011); Jessica Levine, "Early James: Victorian Values, French Influences," *Delicate Pursuit: Discretion in Henry James and Edith Wharton*, (New York: Routledge, 2002), 17-37; Peter Brooks, *Henry James Goes to Paris*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007); and Michael Gorra, *The Portrait of a Novel: Henry James and the Making of an American Masterpiece*, (New York: Liveright, 2013).

[243] See Henry James, "Nathaniel Hawthorne," *Literary Criticism: Essays on Literature, American Writers, English Writers*, (New York: The Library of America, 1984).

[244] Henry James, *The Notebooks of Henry James*, Eds. F.O Matthiessen and Kenneth B. Murdoch, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 18. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text.

Early in the novel, Henrietta Stackpole—recently arrived from America—is alarmed to find Isabel "'drifting away'" and shares with Ralph her concern that her old friend "'is not the same as she once so beautifully was'" (*PL*, 109). She conscripts Ralph in a rather fuzzy scheme to "'change her back again'" and chastises him when he responds in jest—"'I shall enjoy that immensely!...I'll be Caliban and you shall be Ariel'" (*PL*, 109)—by rather severely reminding him: "'I'm not talking about imaginary characters; I'm talking about Isabel. Isabel's intensely real.'" (*PL*, 109). The earnestness of this insistence on Isabel's empirical actuality serves, of course, to foreground her (merely) textual existence. Passing though it is, the comment is worth stumbling over because it makes emphatic something that fiction typically works to keep at the periphery of readers' awareness: the ontological inferiority[245] of literary character. As a metafictional utterance whose destined audience is the reader, its perlocutionary effect is antithetical to its locutionary one: rather than reassure its addressee that Isabel is real, it reinforces her confidence in Isabel's lack of being. On the one hand, Henrietta's statement is plainly facetious: Isabel is, of course, an imaginary character, and the novel's task is to effect and document her development. On the other hand, however, her words index a qualm: if Isabel is really "'real,'" then the novel—which should traffic only in possible people, not actual ones—has misappropriated her, and a certain agitation should attend the activity of reading (after all, what right have we to peer into Isabel's mind if she is not an invention?). In this chapter, I argue that *The Portrait of a Lady* provides a sustained meditation on an endangerment James saw as inherent to the realist novel: the risk that, in "super-adding" the "elements of a 'subject,'" it

[245]For a full account of readers' subliminal awareness of the discrepant ontology between imagined and human beings, and how the transparency of fictional evocations of consciousness enable the latency of this awareness, see Gallagher, "The Rise of Fictionality."

perpetrates a form of violence against its found(l)ing "sense of a single character" (*AN*, 42).[246]

4.3. "There had been no plot"

The Portrait of a Lady's shallow character-field is matched by its spartan plot. Unlike traditional marriage plots, in which (mostly happy) marriages function as the telos of plots that are frequently convoluted, Isabel's disastrous marriage to a "'sterile dilettante'" (*PL*, 292) becomes the substance of a fairly straightforward plot. In the Preface, James borrows from Ivan Turgenev the category of the "image *en disponibilité*"—"stray" and "unattached" (*AN*, 44)—to describe his heroine's susceptibility to the solicitations of plot, writing that Turgenev considered fictional characters to be "*disponibles*, subject to the chances, the complications of existence" (*AN*, 43). Claiming to have first envisioned Isabel in "perfect isolation" (*AN*, 48), at once alienated from the involvements that typically express literary character and yet "vivid, so strangely, in spite of being *still at large*, *not confined* by the conditions, *not engaged* in the tangle, to which we look for much of the impress that constitutes an identity" (*AN*, 47, emphases mine), James suggests that characterological vividness might precede narrative embeddedness and implicitly raises the possibility that such embeddedness could in fact dim or obscure character. More explicitly, he equates plot not only with activity, but with unavailability. Marriage and "occupation" are used synonymously to connote the former's capacity to take one away, to enforce one's absence: as Isabel apologetically alleges when she comes to Ralph's hotel to bid him goodbye, by way of excusing the rarity of her visits during his sojourn in Rome, "'when one's married one has so much occupation'" (*PL*, 418).

[246] Isabel's orphanhood seems significant, insofar as James imagines the novel performing an adoptive maneuver and recruits minor characters to function as parental or custodial guardians of Isabel's destiny.

This condition of being occupied by marriage subtends Isabel's larger evacuation from, or refusal to subscribe to, the presiding premises and etiologies of the novel, which is organized around a pair of plots: the first—Ralph's scheme to supply Isabel with enough capital to "'meet the requirements of her imagination'" (*PL*, X)—both facilitates and is displaced by the second, in which Mme. Merle, with Osmond's cooperation, coerces Isabel into a miserable union as a way of insuring their daughter's future. Ralph's magnanimity, far from guaranteeing Isabel a reprieve from the necessity of matrimony and ushering her toward the pursuit of her own ambitions, leaves her vulnerable to exploitation. Yet Isabel remains troublingly remote from the intersubjective proximities, communions, and fellowships—however objectionable—to which the twinned unfurling of these plots would open her. Unlike Kate Croy or Maggie Verver (in their respective willingness to orchestrate or plunge into formidable plots); Merton Densher (in cooperating in Milly's deception); Lambert Strether (in the risk he incurs by discontinuing a misguided mission); or even Milly Theale and John Marcher (in their anguished assent to plots against which they are helpless—in vastly different ways—to marshal defenses), Isabel has a strained relation to plot that ends up looking like a kind of abstinence.

In "The Art of Fiction," the iconic treatise on narrative aesthetics that James wrote three years after *The Portrait of a Lady*'s transatlantic serialization, he insists that plot and character are mutually constitutive of one another: "what is character but the determination of incident? What is incident but the illustration of character?" But Isabel's uneasy intercourse with plot belies the crispness of this formula; indeed, while her sexual repression and squeamishness have received considerable notice from scholars, the chasteness of her encounter with plot has garnered little, despite its importance to the novel's notoriously

exasperating dénouement.[247] Many readers—among them Grace Norton, James's close friend and confidante, who claimed to have flung her copy of *The Portrait* across the room in a huff upon reaching the end—have felt goaded by the final chapter, which, writes Sigi Joettkandt, "seems like James's distinctly perverse refusal to allow us a satisfying narrative ending" (Joettkandt, 1). The novel's conclusion (Isabel's allegiance to her nuptial vows) contravenes the belated fulfillment of Ralph's sublimated plot, which would be promoted and sanctioned by the disclosures that energize the final third of the novel: namely, that Gilbert Osmond and Serena Merle were once lovers; that Pansy is their daughter; that Isabel has been unwittingly but ruthlessly instrumentalized by Mme. Merle; and that Isabel has Ralph to thank for her wealth. Upholding a promise that these deceits would excuse her from the honoring effectively deprives the novel of what D.A. Miller calls "closure," which "justif[ies] the cessation of narrative and… complete[s] the meaning of what has gone before" (Miller, xi).

The idea of preordination is intolerable to Isabel, even as conspiracies and collusions—both beneficent and malevolent—animate the novel. To consider her actions subject to exogenous forces is distasteful to her, and her faith in free will and self-determination is in tension with the novel's nefarious (if minimal) plottedness.[248] At a point in the narrative when she is amply entitled to suspect that "perhaps without [Serena Merle] these things would not have been" (*PL*, 340), Isabel hastens to censor this thought: "to

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[247] See Sigi Joettkandt, "The Portrait of an Act: Representation and Ethics in The Portrait of a Lady," for a discussion of the affiliative drive underlying critical postmortems of the novel's ending: "Few of James's novels have generated as much reader frustration as *The Portrait of a Lady*…[O]ur collective irritation…manifests itself…in the growing plethora of competing critical interpretations seeking to explain—and thereby in part to mitigate—Isabel's controversial decision."

[248] This tension is thematized in the principal hazards to her happiness: convenience and convention. Both stem from the Latin root *convenire*, whose meanings include meeting and communion. Isabel is "'made a *convenience* of'" not only by Mme. Merle, but by Osmond, Ralph, and even her aunt Lydia, who first deploys the term when describing the advantage of having "taken up" Isabel (*PL*, 31); Ralph describes Isabel's alliance with Osmond as having "'ground [her] in the very mill of the *conventional*.'"

associate Madame Merle with [her] disappointment would have been a petty revenge…There had been *no plot*, no snare; she had looked and considered and chosen" (*PL*, 340, emphasis mine). Although Isabel concedes that "Madame Merle might have made Gilbert Osmond's marriage," she is convinced that "she certainly had not made Isabel Archer's. That was the work of—Isabel scarcely knew what: of nature, providence, fortune, of the eternal mystery of things" (*PL*, 339). This inclination to disown any interference from others bespeaks an acute sensitivity to the vulgarity of the devices that drive narrative forward, and this sensitivity engenders a species of froideur that is discrepant both from the austerity of Osmondianism, on the one hand, and from Madame Merle's cool duplicity (which is itself provoked by maternal passion and the pain of extraordinary loss), on the other. It is, rather, an estrangement from the story that the novel would give her and a quiet indifference to the relational self.

For Isabel, the "accident" of fortune—the very basis of the novel's plot—is excruciatingly crass: there is "a certain grossness attaching to… an unexpected inheritance" and "nothing very delicate in inheriting seventy thousand pounds" (*PL*, 358). This "gross" and indelicate windfall precipitates her loss of confidence in her ability to be a prudent steward of her own opportunities and precipitates her willful divestiture of such crudely conferred "freedom." Lydia Touchett's ballistic analogy indicates that the news of Isabel's bequest has traumatized her: "'It's been as if a big gun were suddenly fired off behind her; she's feeling herself to see if she be hurt'" (*PL*, 181). While visiting Ralph in San Remo a short while later, Isabel herself attests to this sensation of shock, telling her cousin: "'I'm afraid; I can't tell you. A large fortune means freedom, and I'm afraid of that. It's such a fine thing, and one should make such a good use of it'" (*PL*, 193).

Isabel makes use of this freedom by passing it on to Gilbert Osmond. If wealth provides the material condition of possibility for Isabel to become a heroine, we might say she nominates Osmond as a more worthy candidate to assume that role, effectively volunteering to become a minor character in a story for which she has been designated the protagonist.[249] In chapter forty-two, she remembers that she "had been filled with the desire to transfer the weight of [her money] to some other conscience, to some more prepared receptacle" (*PL*, 358), and in one of the chapter's most poignant insights, it dawns on Isabel that "but for her money…she would never have married [Osmond]" (*PL*, 358). The language she uses to describe her goal in doing so—"she would launch his boat for him; she would be his providence" (357)—echoes James's definition of the "light *ficelle*" (*AN*, 55), a character whose function is solely auxiliary.

In a classic reading by Millicent Bell, this act of transposition is taken to signal Isabel's "accept[ance of] the most conventional of female plots in the abnegation of wifehood...Isabel first dreams of making herself potent" by "act[ing] through delegation…Osmond will do her doing for her" (Bell, 768). Yet this explanation of the novel's most bewildering act finesses the concussion that the novel's peripeteia, or reversal of fortunes, inflicts on Isabel. It is not the dream of potency that urges Isabel to marry Osmond, but rather the longing to "rub off" (*PL*, 358), or turn down, an occasion to which she must rise. Far from administrating her wealth by proxy, Isabel wishes to be rid of it altogether. Other encounters that spur the plot forward receive similar treatment. Later in

[249] It is important to distinguish here between the sort of deference that Isabel shows toward Osmond and that which is exemplified by Victorian heroines whose *Bildung* or development is encompassed by the act of surrendering personal identity to a husband. After Osmond has confided that he loves her, "she instantly rose…She had turned away, but in the movement she had stopped herself and dropped her gaze upon him. The two remained a while in this situation, exchanging a long look—the large, conscious look of the critical hours of life" (*PL*, 263). Isabel's instinct to pivot away at the uttering of an attachment is suspended here; she not only permits Osmond to approach and to look at her; she luxuriates in being the object of his regard. If Isabel relinquishes center-stage or shrinks from view within the larger narrative, she delights in requiting and holding her husband's gaze.

the novel, she reflects on a meeting with Caspar Goodwood, whose "unsatisfied claim on her" (*PL*, 404)—the fact that she has caused him grief—is a point of contact that Isabel prefers to "steer wide" of (*PL*, 404). Caspar, however, metes out "the most superfluous of shocks...He had bumped against her prow…while her hand was on the tiller, and—to complete the metaphor—had given the lighter vessel a strain" (*PL*, 404).

4.4. Hovering at Edges: Doorways, Porticos, Nooks, and Vestibules

Isabel's ambivalence about being an object of regard or interest[250] is in tension with the novel's historical grounding in the sociological and political ascent of privacy: the rise of the genre is tightly interwoven with the increased prevalence of private spaces and experiences in the late-eighteenth and nineteenth centuries[251]—chief among these, perhaps, the spread of the bourgeois, single-family household and the growing affection for secluded nooks in domestic architecture.[252] Peter Brooks writes, "private life was from the inception of the genre the novel's subject matter," (*BW*, 28) and the novel paradoxically consists of "invading the domain it claims to speak of and for" (*BW*, 53), producing the illusion of inner lives by intruding on and exposing them. Indeed, it is precisely the incandescence of such "penetrations" of Isabel's mind that have earned *The Portrait of a Lady* its reputation as one of the earliest exemplars of psychological realism. Yet, as established earlier, Isabel's presence winnows as the text progresses, gradually becoming *less* distinct—more "'perfectly

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[250] Indeed, *dis*interestedness, as I discuss further below, is one of the qualities that she most cherishes in others, not only in the sense of impartiality but also in the sense of being *un*interested, not guilty of undue curiosity or concern.

[251] See, for example, *The Rise of the Novel* and Peter Brooks, *Body Work*: *Objects of Desire in Modern Narrative*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993).

[252] See, for example, Witold Rybczynski, *Home: A Short History of an Idea*, (New York: Viking, 1986); Sharon Marcus, *Apartment Stories: City and Home in Nineteenth-Century Paris and London*, (Berkeley: UC Press), 1999; and Julia Prewitt Brown, *The Bourgeois Interior*, (Charlottesville: UVA Press, 2008).

inscrutable"' (*PL*, 426), as Caspar Goodwood puts it late in the novel—until her final decision to return to Osmond precipitates a full-fledged (literal and figurative) recession.

The sanctity in which Isabel holds her privacy renders *The Portrait of a Lady* on some level an act of profanation. The sacredness of kept secrets, and the comparative desecration of "published" confidences, is perhaps never more emphatic than when Isabel solemnly tells Henrietta, who has recommended divorce[253] : "'I can't publish my mistake. I don't think that's decent. I would much rather die."' (*PL*, 407). Isabel consistently declines to subject her inner thoughts and feelings to external inspection: besides consistently behaving in ways that provoke confusion and irritation,[254] she repeatedly petitions for the right to be incoherent, even unaccountable, in her conduct. Perhaps the most salient instance of this trend toward perversity, evident from the very beginning of the novel,[255] is her categorical refusal to make her motivations for marrying Osmond transparent. She informs Mrs. Touchett, "'It was my duty to tell you, Aunt Lydia, but I don't think it's my duty to explain to you. Even if it were I shouldn't be able…; in talking about it you have me at a disadvantage. I can't talk about it"' (*PL*, 283), and she later reiterates this attitude to Ralph, claiming, "'I can't explain to you what I feel, what I believe, and I wouldn't if I could"' (*PL*, 292). Justifying this decision, even to defend it or to see it ratified, would violate her

[253] For a full account of *The Portrait of a Lady*'s involvement in the heated debates over divorce in late-nineteenth-century America and Europe, see Melissa J. Ganz, "'A Strange Opposition' : *The Portrait of a Lady* and the Divorce Debates," *The Henry James Review*, Volume 27, Number 2, Spring 2006, 156-174.

[254] As early as chapter eight, when speaking with her uncle about her rejection of Lord Warburton, we are told that she "fell into that appearance of a sudden change of point of view with which she sometimes startled and even displeased her interlocutors" (*PL*, 103).

[255] Shortly after receiving her first proposal of marriage (from Lord Warburton), in the novel's thirteenth chapter, Isabel marvels at her capacity for illogic: "It was very strange: where, ever, was any tangible link between her impression and her act?" (*PL*, 107).

privacy: by explaining herself, Isabel would permit others to peek inside her mind, as it were.[256]

While scholars have been attentive to what Elizabeth Boyle Machlan calls "architecture's authority over all other tropes in the novel" (Machlan, 395), the topography of reticence charted through intermediary and clandestine spaces in *The Portrait of a Lady* remains under-examined. Sites of passage and withdrawal, several of which enjoy particular prominence within the narrative, map out Isabel's reluctance to fully inhabit the various architectural settings through which she transits over the course of the novel. While Machlan makes a convincing case that each domestic structure (Albany, Gardencourt, Roccanera) correlates to a generic superstructure (realism, romance, gothic, respectively), it is important to note that these various settings are distinguished less by their usurpations of one another within the novel than they are by Isabel's hesitation to meet their generic expectations. They serve, in other words, to stage the peripheral centrality that defines her as a protagonist.

Isabel's first appearance in the text, at the start of the second chapter, is nearly adjourned: Isabel "lingered so near the threshold" (*PL*, 27) of the Gardencourt doorway that Ralph must coax her outdoors to greet her uncle. In this scene, laden with meta-fictional undertones, her dawdling between interior and exterior postpones her own incursion into the world of the novel: the lawn, which "seemed but the extension of a luxurious interior" (*PL*, 18), figures the world of representation, which refers to an ulterior reality but is discrete from it. At this point in the novel, everything within the English country house is beyond

[256] J. Hillis Miller's "What is a Kiss?" offers an illuminating account of the way in which moments of decision are sites of narrative opacity in *The Portrait of a Lady*: "for the writer, the narrator, the character, and the reader the basis of decision is hidden" (744), he claims, because "ethical decisions, if they are real decisions and not automatic, preprogrammed actions, are never fully justifiable by rational explanations. They are leaps in the dark" (746). For Hillis Miller, *The Portrait of a Lady* teaches us that the sphere of ethical action lies beyond the scope of linguistic communication, that it is therefore intensely private.

the ambit of representation: the reader's view has consisted exclusively of three men enjoying the ritual of afternoon tea on the house's grounds. Thus, Isabel dithers at the edge of a prologue anticipating her own arrival, and the inauguration of her story depends on its disruption.

Upon entering the frame of her story, one of Isabel's first (fleetingly successful) moves is to deflect the attention she attracts. When her uncle tells her, bluntly but tactfully, "'you're very beautiful yourself,'" Isabel flinches at the compliment. Flushing and jumping to her feet, she seeks obscure refuge in a non sequitur query about Gardencourt: "'How old is your house? Is it Elizabethan?'" (*PL*, 28). In parrying a comment about her physical appearance (one inevitably prompted by looking at her) with a question about an architectural idiom, it is as if Isabel seeks to reclaim an inviolability that the diegesis's turn toward her—with all the phallic innuendo of a long, hard stare—has jeopardized. The consequences of this flustered interrogative are twofold: Isabel both diverts the collective gaze (however fleetingly) and draws an affinity (however vague) between herself and the inanimate facade she enlists in this diversion.

Several chapters later, this proleptic affinity is elaborated when Ralph, as part of a first-person monologue set off by quotation marks, compares Isabel ("'a character like that'") to "'a beautiful edifice'" that he has been instructed to "'walk in and admire'" (*PL*, 63). The omniscient addendum to Ralph's reflections offers a painstaking corrective to this analogy:

> The sentiment of these reflexions was very just; but it was not exactly true that Ralph Touchett had had a key put into his hand. His cousin was a very brilliant girl, who would take, as he said, a good deal of knowing; but she needed the knowing, and his attitude with regard to her, though it was contemplative and critical, was not judicial. He surveyed the edifice from the outside and admired it greatly; he looked in at the windows and received an impression of proportions equally fair. But he felt that he *saw it only by glimpses* and that he had not yet stood under the roof. The door was fastened, and

> though he had keys in his pocket he had a conviction that none of them would fit. She was intelligent and generous; it was a fine free nature; but what was she going to do with herself? (*PL*, 63-4, emphasis mine)

While the novel proceeds to answer the question of what Isabel will do,[257] the extent to which it manages to "stand under her roof" is debatable. In fact, the fulfillment of the first criterion seems to interfere with that of the second. What Isabel does, or what is done to her, can only be inadequately reconciled with who she becomes.

Isabel's provocative relationship to plot is allegorized in the frequency with which she emerges and vanishes, often through doorways or thresholds,[258] and in her penchant for alcoves and vestibules. Doorsills are especially significant in framing, quite literally, the ways in which the protagonist both beckons and shuns notice. When Isabel first appears in the doorway at Gardencourt and when she re-appears for the first time since her marriage in the second volume—emerging from a "gilded" doorway in chapter thirty-seven—her advents testify to invisible provenances and interim engagements. The physical and affective hinterlands they betoken—places beyond or peripheral to the narrative screen—are sometimes, but not always, retrospectively mapped out for the reader (and often only partially). One of the "dominant narrative effects of…centrality," according to Woloch, is "the equation of solitude with consciousness" (*OvM*, 99), but while this is true of several key episodes in the text (most notably the fireside vigil in chapter 42), one of the more unusual aspects of *The Portrait of a Lady* is the extent to which its protagonist is sequestered from the narrative and its tendency to recount moments of transformation retrospectively or to omit them altogether.

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[257] Here, the question that the *Preface* attributes to the author is attributed to Ralph: "what was she going to do with herself?"

[258] For example: before their engagement, when she leaves Osmond's Florentine villa after having visited Pansy there alone, the young girl stands "watching Isabel cross the clear, grey court and disappear into the brightness beyond the big *portone*, which gave a wider dazzle as it opened" (*PL*, 270); Isabel "passed out" after telling Mme. Merle she "'should like never to see [her] again'" (*PL*, 464); and, on the last page of the novel, Isabel's permanent departure from the narrative frame is heralded by "put[ting] her hand on the latch" of the Gardencourt door.

When Mrs. Osmond (as she is rather startlingly called) makes her debut in the second volume, she is passing from one room to another during a soirée at Roccanera. An interval of several years has elapsed, the content of which is only imparted post factum, and it is astonishing how much of her experience is conveyed in this way, or simply excluded: the months she has spent traveling around Europe and North Africa in Madame Merle's company, Osmond's proposal and her acceptance, their wedding ceremony, the first years of her marriage and its deterioration, her pregnancy, the birth of her son, and his death in infancy. The narrative's forward-skipping, backward-looking, and skimming over have been discussed in terms of (proto-)modernist techniques, but what seems most noteworthy about them is the way in which they scramble and disorient the reader's contact with Isabel. The ex post facto management of these events within the discourse is the counterpart to the logistic impediments to intimacy within the story: the period of tourism during which Isabel could only have been reached by telegram, a more or less clandestine courtship carried out in the "quietest part" of the Cascine's "suburban wilderness" (*PL*, 287), the newlyweds' move to Rome, and the demands of Isabel's institutional duties as a wife, stepmother, and hostess at Palazzo Roccanera. These physical withdrawals and engagements are formally iterated in their telling by means of the temporal distance between occurrence and impartation.

The reader learns about the most tragic of the events enumerated above as Ralph meditates on how his cousin has changed since she and Osmond were married nearly two years prior: "she had lost her child; that was a sorrow, but it was a sorrow she scarcely spoke of; there was more to say about it than she could say to Ralph. It belonged to the past, moreover" (*PL*, 330). Critics, when they cite this loss at all, typically do so as proof that Isabel's and Osmond's marriage has been consummated. While it certainly performs that function, it at the same time signifies the cumulative impact of these disrupted chronologies

and elisions: Isabel is both represented and withheld, both solicits identification and remains indisposed to it. The time she spends in spaces spared by or beside—rather than immediately subject to—narrative exposition, impinge on the time she spends within the narrative (which is, in a crucial sense, *all* of her time, since the discourse never deserts her, or news of her, for more than a few pages at a stretch), making her presence within the story seem sporadic or stuttered.

This is not the only respect in which the narrative seems to afford glimpses of Isabel rather than unmediated access to her. Prior to and immediately following the novel's first turning point, in which Isabel is granted financial autonomy, the key episodes of her life (Warburton's and Caspar's proposals, Isabel's first meeting with Mme. Merle, and Osmond's declaration of love, for example) are shared simultaneously with the reader. The omniscient perspective in these early chapters is relatively sanguine, affording prolonged panoramas of Isabel against which the relative frugality of later expository treatments can have the effect of glances or veiled vistas. In earlier chapters (three, four, six, and seven in particular), the narrator is apt to instruct the reader in how to interpret Isabel, for the most part counseling against dismissal or reprehension—"[s]mile not, however, I venture to repeat, at this simple young woman from Albany…She was a person of great good faith" (*PL*, 95), he cautions—and at times verging on didacticism, admitting for example that Isabel may be found "both precipitate and unduly fastidious," but that "the latter of these facts, if the charge be true, may serve to exonerate her from the discredit of the former" (*PL*, 94). As the novel progresses, this paternalistic tone ebbs, though the narrator continues to punctuate the text with diagnostic or advisory asides (mostly in her favor). As the narrative perspective emanates less reliably from a first-person omniscience clearly discrepant from Isabel's own consciousness, free indirect discourse or psycho-narration becomes more prominent, its

ascendancy perhaps best incarnated in chapter forty-two, which I discuss in greater detail below, in which Isabel's own subjectivity dominates her fireside reflections on the fiasco of her marriage, but is finely mingled with the narrator's voice.

Among the primary criteria by which, according to Woloch, a protagonist may be identified, is the frequency with which s/he is referenced in absentia.[259] Woloch uses Elizabeth Bennett as a case study to claim that interest in a character who is physically removed from the scene alerts the reader to the protagonist's identity—"when she leaves the frame of the narrative discourse, the other characters begin to talk about *her*" (Woloch, 81)—and at the beginning of the novel, Isabel's centrality is established in this way. When Daniel Touchett, before she has even appeared, hastily amends his declaration that Lord Warburton "may fall in love with whomsoever [he] please[s]" with the proviso, "'but you mustn't fall in love with my niece'" (*PL*, 23), he immediately tags this niece as someone of importance. A conversation between Ralph and his mother in her dressing room, between him and his father on the latter's deathbed, and between him and Henrietta Stackpole shortly after she arrives from America, as well as Mme. Merle's discussion of Isabel with Osmond in Florence before their engagement, and with Mrs. Touchett at Palazzo Crescentini following Daniel Touchett's death, are all instances in which Isabel is explicitly and extensively deliberated while she herself is *hors scene*. Gradually, though, this kind of behind-the-back gossip subsides, and Isabel is spoken about less often out of earshot. During his Roman cure, Ralph and Henrietta "talked about everything and always differed;" but Isabel herself is off-limits: "everything, that is, but Isabel—a topic as to which Ralph always had a thin forefinger on his lips" (*PL*, 413). Similarly, a cursory exchange between Goodwood and Ralph

[259] See "The Space of the Protagonist I" and "The Space of the Protagonist II" in Woloch, *The One v. The Many*.

regarding Caspar's sense that Isabel "'thinks [he's] watching her'" is "the only conversation these men had about Isabel Archer" (*PL*, 416).

Perhaps most astounding is that the exhilarating expansion of Isabel's consciousness in chapter forty-two—which James himself pays the compliment of being "obviously the best thing in the book" (*AN*, 57)—is itself a moment of retirement from the externalities of plot and intersubjective connection. The hushed acoustics of the scene (it takes place in a "soundless saloon") and the muffled "sound of other lives…as from above" (*PL*, 356) that Isabel imagines are audible from the "depression" (*PL*, 356) into which she has descended are reminiscent of a playhouse soundscape, in which the actor might hear murmurs from the box seats. What I want to emphasize most, however, are the ways in which this scene is confiscated from the narrative, rather than propulsive to it. Even the servant who comes in to stoke the fire and replace the guttered candles—by virtue of his anonymity (he is never named, and referred to only with the indefinite article "a") and the reported speech through which Isabel's request is conveyed—seems an interloper or revenant from a neighboring narrative. Her own trance-like state is a mental retreat from, rather than an affirmation of, the relational underpinnings of her situation. The series of recognitions on which the power of this vigil rest have neither accustomed themselves to, nor do they acknowledge, the interventions of others; on the contrary, Isabel's epiphanies are intensely personal and even onanistic, insofar as they discern and esteem events that have escaped narrative exposition: her own self-effacement in Osmond's company prior to marrying him, which she condemns as disingenuous; her "deep mistrust of her husband" (*PL*, 356), which is unaffiliated with any specific transgression; her regret that she had read him synecdochically, "mistak[ing] a part for the whole" (*PL*, 357); his stifling conviction that she "had too many ideas and…must get rid of them" (*PL*, 359); her "scorn" and "disdain" for his chary morality and parochial

intellect (*PL*, 362). The subtlety and radical privacy of these insights pushes them to the brink of negligibility from the perspective of story; yet they are the stuff of the reader's first foray, from Isabel's point of view, into "the house of darkness, the house of dumbness, the house of suffocation" (*PL*, 360) that is her marriage.

Isabel's most overt confrontation with the underpinnings of plot takes place when her sister-in-law, the Countess Gemini, apprises her of Madame Merle's treachery.[260] Isabel responds to this cataclysmic information at first with inertia and then with a display of empathy (she weeps for the "'poor, poor woman!'") that bypasses any reckoning with her own pain: "'You don't take it as I should have thought'" (*PL*, 455), Osmond's sister, nonplussed, observes. Later, Isabel deliberately foregoes the opportunity to personally accuse her former companion[261] and never articulates, even to herself, whether and how Madame Merle has injured her: "the only thing to regret was that Madame Merle had been so—well, so unimaginable. Just here her intelligence dropped, from literal inability to say what is was that Madame Merle had been. Whatever it was it was for Madame Merle herself to regret it" (*PL*, 465). What begins as a countenancing of betrayal's affective aftermath—ugly interpersonal emotions such as anger, remorse, and disgust—quickly terminates in transferring this errand to Madame Merle. Thus, while Isabel recognizes Madame Merle as an agent of harm, she neither identifies this harm to herself nor identifies herself as its

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[260] James fretted in his notebooks that, by having this information communicated second-hand, he sacrificed a "great scene" between Isabel and the perpetrator of her calamity. However, the sidelong nature of this revelation is in aesthetic and affective accord with Isabel's advance through the narrative, which, as discussed in section ii, scrupulously avoids head-on run-ins with others.

[261] This unrealized opportunity occurs in chapter fifty-two, when Mme. Merle and Isabel run into one another when both pay visits to Pansy at the convent where she receives a strict parochial education: "Madame Merle had guessed in the space of an instant that everything was at end between them, and in the space of another instant she had guessed the reason why. The person who stood there was not the same one she had seen hitherto, but was a very different person—a person who knew her secret…Isabel saw it all as distinctly as if it had been reflected in a high clear glass. It might have been a great moment for her, for it might have been a moment of triumph…There was a moment during which, if she had turned and spoken, she might have said something that hissed like a lash. *But she closed her eyes, and then the hideous vision dropped…Isabel's only revenge was to be silent still—to leave Madame Merle in this unprecedented situation*" (*PL*, 458-59, emphases mine).

object. When she admits to Lydia Touchett that Madame Merle "'made a convenience of me" (*PL*, 475), the ambiguity of her phrasing fails to specify whether Madame Merle took advantage of Isabel's own error, or manipulated her into one. She dispels, or lessens, the "knowledge" that "she had been an applied handled hung-up tool, as senseless and convenient as mere shaped wood and iron," simply by shutting her eyes: "then the hideous image dropped" (*PL*, 459).

Isabel further refuses to claim injury, or to recognize Madame Merle's power over her, by invoking the word "wicked" to describe the latter's behavior but then equivocating on its judiciousness. Moreover, reflecting on her life while she travels from Rome to London, Isabel stops short of intellectual or affective rapprochement to the shape this life has taken:

> The truth of things, their mutual relations, their meaning, and for the most part their horror, rose before her with a kind of architectural vastness. She remembered a thousand trifles; they started to life with the spontaneity of a shiver. She had thought them trifles at the time; now she saw that they had been weighted with lead. Yet even now they were trifles after all, for of what use was it to her to understand them? (*PL*, 645)

The disaffection and torpor that saturate Isabel's journey to Gardencourt tend to be subordinated by readings of the novel that focus on her intentional acquiescence to the duties of a wife, mother, and lady. By taking this fatigue and apathy seriously, however, we're obliged to question whether Isabel ever privileges the knowledge that appears regnant at the end of the novel: that, as she puts it to Ralph on his deathbed, *Osmond* had "'married [*her*] for the money'" (*PL*, 478). A syntactical symmetry links this declaration with Isabel's realization, mentioned earlier, that *she* had married *Osmond* because of her money, and the later statement would seem to repeal the earlier one, suggesting that Isabel finally capitulates plot's inexorable thrust. This carriage scene, however, contiguous to the deathbed one, grants the pervasiveness of plot—the ominous loads with which it burdens that which had

hitherto seemed inconsequential—only to shelter her from its effects. Isabel does not tenant the "architectural vastness" of the story others have built for her; rather, she shrinks into the "corner" of her impassivity, giving this "vastness" the effect of emptiness.

Even the penultimate chapter, in which Isabel and Ralph "look at the truth together" (*PL*, 478), is only superficially cathectic, since the admissions that comprise it—that Isabel has suffered profoundly and that her cousin is at least partially to blame for this —are possible, and pleasurable, only in the face of Ralph's imminent death. If Isabel imbues with value the idea that Ralph has had a determining impact on her fate, the fading presence with which he joins her in and bears witness to this act is soon extinguished. Others who would stake some claim on her life (Merle, Caspar) are banished. The novel forecasts a confrontation with Osmond that, significantly, remains beyond its scope.

The novel ends, rather formulaically, with the temptation to seize an opportunity whose foreclosure had constituted its own condition of possibility. In the penultimate chapter, Isabel considers a counterfactual that she had never, apparently, entertained: "it suddenly struck her that if her aunt Lydia had not come that day in just that way and found her alone, everything might have been different. She might have had another life and she might have been a woman more blest" (*PL*,472). Implicitly, the alternative life referred to here is the one she might have shared with Caspar Goodwood, whose visit she was expecting that day, in lieu of her aunt's, and whose proposal—had it not been preempted by her expatriation—she may have never felt entitled to reject. It is a hypothetical that, several pages later, she is offered the chance to reify: "'You must save what you can of your life; you mustn't lose it all simply because you've lost a part,'" Caspar exhorts (*PL*, 488). Had Isabel married Caspar, there could have been no novel; yet, upon gaining the novel's bleak horizon, it is Caspar who offers her a fresh narrative ambit. In this sense, he comes to represent what

Andrew Miller has called the "optative" and "perfectionist" modes[262] : he stands both for a "life unled" and a "life one might have in th[e] future" (Miller, 192).

Isabel's refusal of Caspar is often read as a renunciation (of prospective freedom, happiness, unselfish love, escape, etc.), but this reading relies on a differentiation between Caspar's proposal and the marriage to which Isabel finally returns. In fact, the perfectionist promise he extends—under the banner of true, or better, love—is strangely foul: "It wrapped her about, it lifted her off her feet, while the very taste of it, as of something potent, acrid and strange, forced open her set teeth." (*PL*, 488). Indeed, a jarring figurative overlap occurs between Caspar's promissoriness and the putrefaction of nuptial oaths that awaits Isabel at Roccanera when Caspar himself, echoing the narrator's language, laments: "it's too monstrous of you to think…of going to open your mouth to that poisoned air" (*PL*, 488). Caspar offers, in other words, neither remission nor deliverance; rather, his "intense identity" is a consort of Osmond's "personality," which, as we learn in chapter forty-two, had "stepped forth and stood erect" (*PL*, 362). The orgasmic oblivion of Caspar's illicit embrace—"she felt his arms about her and his lips on her own lips. His kiss was like white lightning, a flash that spread, and spread again, and stayed" (*PL*, 489)—temporarily inscribes Isabel's body with the sort of somatic, often erotic, desire that is, per Brooks, the engine of the nineteenth-century novel.[263] Isabel swiftly wrests herself from this inscription, "dart[ing] from the spot" and "only…paus[ing]" at the Gardencourt door, in whose frame she will—upon lifting the latch—be backlit by the light beaming from the house's windows. That the last image of its protagonist is a silhouette, and thus the obverse or most parsimonious form of portraiture in its featurelessness and anonymity, is consistent

[262] See Andrew H. Miller, *The Burdens of Perfection: On Ethics and Reading in Nineteenth-Century British Literature*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008).
[263] See Brooks, *Body Work*.

with the way in which Isabel's body signifies by abjuring desire, rather than hosting or tracking the itinerary of physiological arousals.

The lives Isabel might have lived have little enchantment for her, and the future into which she advances portends little more than longevity ("she should last," merely, "to the end"). The choice that ends the novel is thus neither perfectionist nor optative, but rather ablative and accusative: Isabel "had not known where to turn, but she knew now. There was a very straight path" (*PL*, 490). The missing prepositional supplements—she simultaneously turns "away (from)" and "toward"—suggest a directionality vectored around privacy and publicity rather than projected futures and hypothetical pasts. Isabel's turn separates her from an existence in which she would once again become—as an adulteress or divorcée—an object of scrutiny, scandal, rumor, and likely revulsion. At the same time, by "'start[ing] for Rome'" (*PL*, 490)—as Henrietta puts it to Caspar when he shows up on the doorstep of her Marylebone townhouse "'in hopes [he] should find Mrs. Osmond'" (*PL*, 490)—Isabel elects a quiescent netherland "detached from hope or regret" (*PL*, 465) in which the embarrassments of being looked at have been largely diffused: Ralph and Daniel Touchett have died, Madame Merle has been exiled to America, Lord Warburton has married, and Henrietta Stackpole is on the verge of following suit.

This netherland therefore resembles the origin that James ascribes to Isabel when "recover[ing]…the germ of [his] story" : "I see that it must have consisted not at all in…a 'plot,'…a set of relations, or in any one of those situations that…immediately fall...into a march, a rush, a patter of quick steps; but altogether in the sense of a single character" (*AN*, 42). Thus, recession and forth-coming are linked in Isabel's final act, which restores her to conditions that very nearly replicate those of her provenance in the "dusky…backshop of the mind" (*AN*, 48), wholly unadorned by the "elements of a 'subject'" (*AN*, 42). Whereas

an oft-cited dispute between Isabel and Madame Merle in chapter nineteen—in which the latter deems every individual "'a cluster of appurtenances'" and Isabel insists that "'nothing that belongs to me is any measure of me'" (*PL*, 175)—has been read as a debate over the relative merits of a transcendental (Isabel) versus materialist (Merle) conception of selfhood—Isabel's apprehensions about a character that is vulnerable to external expressions or influences equally advocates for a notion of personhood antagonistic to narrative itself. Her systematic abstention from the sorts of responses and postures that her narrative "situation" would elicit vexes the accretive model of character, mentioned earlier, according to which fictional minds materialize as part of a tidy dialectical reciprocity with plot.[264] Her mind springs up along the margins and in the interstices of plot, in ways that reinforce her diegetic insistence on an entirety that is prior to accouterment or possession. If James first conceives Isabel in a state of deprivation—*without* a story, in the sense of *lacking*, as well as not yet implicated in, a narrative apparatus—*The Portrait of a Lady* never fully overcomes the anxiety inherent in erecting that apparatus: that "super-adding" the trappings of subject-hood is not only supererogatory to, but endangers, its foundational "sense of a single character" (*AN*, 42).

4.5. Character as Reader

How does Isabel herself read, and what does this tell us about her character? Many of *The Portrait of a Lady*'s critics have seen its tragedy in terms of readerly shortcomings: Isabel's catastrophic error in befriending Serena Merle and in believing her liaison with Gilbert Osmond to be untouched by any motive aside from that of "pleas[ing] herself" is

[264]Speaking of *The Spoils of Poynton*, James refers to character as "interesting as it comes out, and by the process and duration of that emergence" (*AN*, 127-8); of Kate Croy in *The Wings of the Dove*, he recalls "building up… [her] consciousness to the capacity for the load little by little to be laid on it" (*AN*, 297).

seen as an interpretive and perceptive failure.[265] The intimation is that she hasn't read *enough*. Others, in keeping with the standard refrain about Victorian heroines, blame Isabel's failure on her being only-too-keen a reader: Isabel's fondness for novels, in other words, precipitates her lapse in judgment.[266] But both of these viewpoints tend to pay too little heed to Isabel's lackadaisical and capricious reading habits, as well as the rather curious fact that evidence of her passion for novels over other literary forms is thin.

The kind of encounter the novel offers—with an imaginary entity whose mimetic existence interrupts or superimposes itself on the reader's empirical reality—holds little appeal for Isabel herself, who is not only a poor metaphorical reader but literally a frustrated reader of texts. Scenes of mise-en-abîme—in which Isabel's immersion in a book replicates the reader's own—are rare and prone to interruption. In one of the novel's earliest chapters, Lydia Touchett stumbles upon her newly orphaned niece "'sitting in a dreary room on a rainy day, reading a heavy book and boring herself half to death'" (*PL*, 47). This "mysterious apartment" within her late grandmother's house in Albany—rather inexplicably dubbed "the 'office'" (*PL*, 33)—sits adjacent to the library and is "properly entered through the second door of the house, the door that had been condemned" (*PL*, 33). It is thus an archetypal Victorian domestic interior, completely hidden from the public gaze: Isabel "had never opened the bolted door nor removed the green paper…from its side-lights; she had never assured herself that the vulgar street lay beyond" (*PL*, 33). In the novel's very last chapter—at a phase in life when she "has as little interest as ever in literature" and "her attention had never been so little at her command" (*PL*, 483)—Isabel feebly applies herself to a book in the library at Gardencourt, only to be sidetracked by the arrival of Lord Warburton's

[265] See, for example, Sharon Marcus, *Between Women: Friendship, Desire, and Marriage in Victorian England*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).
[266] See, for example, Catherine J. Golden. "Transatlantic Representations of the Woman Reader." *Images of the Woman Reader in Victorian British and American Fiction*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003. pp. 51-78.

carriage. Though the reader is led to assume that Isabel's childhood was frequently punctuated by protracted episodes of novel reading, she is never portrayed within its pages as fully absorbed in another narrative universe. Moreover, her preference for philosophy over fiction[267] suggests that she is little susceptible to enticement by the forms of sympathy and identification that the novel privileges.[268] Though Isabel prizes "imagination," often used as a synonym for empathy, she is seldom seen cultivating this capacity in herself by observing the world through the eyes of an imaginary Other.[269]

An exchange with Ralph, in which she shares with him that she intends to marry Osmond, implicitly betrays Isabel's deprecating attitude toward novels while rendering explicit her wish to abdicate centrality. Distressed by Ralph's confession that he "'had amused himself with planning out a high destiny for [her]'" (*PL*, 291), Isabel chastens him: "'you say you amused yourself with a project for my career—I don't understand that…Don't amuse yourself too much, or I shall think you're doing it at my expense'" (291). We are told that familiarity with George Eliot's novels was among the many advantages of Isabel's upbringing, and she is therefore certainly aware that such amusement at a heroine's expense is exactly what fuels the authorship and popular consumption of novels. In forbidding Ralph to take an interest in her exploits, Isabel implicitly establishes her ontological superiority over characters from whose careers a reader may derive amusement, but she can also be taken to denigrate this kind of reading and its rewards.

Yet, we are told, Isabel "couldn't help being aware" that "she herself was a character" (*PL*, 94). The ambivalent or vacillating status of character as both a moral and

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[267] Isabel enjoys "uncontrolled use of a library full of books," of all of which she prefers "the sandy plains of…German Thought" (*PL*, 33-4).
[268] It seems worth pointing out that her exclamation upon being introduced to Lord Warburton—"'Oh, I hoped there would be a lord; it's just like a novel!'" (*PL*, 27)—indicates a perfunctory and superficial acquaintance with novels, and even an erroneous inclination toward conflating novel with epic and romance.
[269] See Ablow, "The Feeling of Reading."

literary term within her lexical arsenal[270] is one of the most perplexing aspects of the novel; her "awareness" of *being* a character (in the fictional sense) blends seamlessly into her worries about *vitiating* or *dishonoring* her character (in the moral one). In the first half of the novel, Ralph cautions Isabel against assuming a vigilant or proprietary stance toward the latter: "'Don't try so much to form your character…Live as you like best, and your character will take care of itself'" (*PL*, 192). But Isabel's watchfulness is only reinforced over the course of the novel; when Henrietta warns her that she must leave Osmond before he damages her "'character,'" employing this term as a proxy for rectitude, Isabel assures her friend that there's no risk: "'It won't get spoiled,' Isabel answered, smiling. 'I'm taking very good care of it'" (*PL*, 418). This supervision of character facilitates the ensemble of diffident and modest acts or abstentions that sum up to a minimization of the room she consumes in the text, even as it builds up around her.

4.6. Conclusion

James felt that for whatever heft *The Portrait of a Lady* achieved he was most indebted to Isabel. To his notebook, however, he confided his suspicion that readers would criticize him for having left his heroine "en l'air" (*Notebooks*, 18), and beneath the overlay of the solid protagonist there peeps out its antecedent, the "mere slim shade" (*AN*, 51). As I mentioned earlier, this concomitant groundedness and flightiness has not yet been examined in its own right. In this chapter I've endorsed a phenomenology of fictional character sensitive to the

[270] It has been argued that Isabel's zealous campaign to become an ethical character, precisely because it is aesthetically motivated, is unsuccessful (See Seabright, "The Pursuit of Unhappiness: Paradoxical Motivation and the Subversion of Character in Henry James's *The Portrait of a Lady*"), that Isabel fails to distinguish between ethical and literary (or aesthetic) notions of character (Nussbaum, "Comment on Paul Seabright"), and that her hyper-awareness of her own status as a cdharacter makes it difficult for her to negotiate the ethically fraught bi-modality of being both reader and character (see Bollinger, "The Ethics of Reading").

ways in which psychological fleshing out might be concurrent with the sense that a character is fading away. The stakes of such an argument are above all aesthetic, insofar as they concern the idea that narrative aggrandizement (the main character's development) might be inextricable from diminution or récul. They are also, therefore, epistemological and affective, in that they pivot around the possibility that the protagonist might be minor vis-à-vis the presiding structures of knowledge and desire within in the novel: that a prominent interiority might amass along the perimeter of plot and in oblique, rather than dialectical, response to intersections with more menial surrounding characters.

Woloch's "labor theory of character," by pointing to the protagonists latent in minor characters, heightens our cognizance of the fundamental formal inequities of the novel, which cannot "fairly" dwell on or particularize all the persons that populate its pages. In this chapter, I've sought to expand on Woloch's example by thinking about how characterization in the nineteenth-century novel is lithe enough to accommodate the notion that narrative centrality is an onerous burden (a "weight") as well as (or, rather than) an exalted distinction. Moreover, I have pressed on how characterization can be alive to the ways in which the novel (conventionally) denies to its protagonist(s) certain dignities and prerogatives more readily accessible to beings both more and less advantaged ontologically (i.e. real people and minor characters, respectively). I hope, too, to have demonstrated how characterization may index certain qualms attendant upon the novel's spectatorial task (in which the reader must collaborate).

By-passing or passing on (to others) the stories the novel assigns her, and squirming under the glare of its regard, Isabel offers a model of character that might help us to parse a peculiarity that afflicts the nineteenth-century novel more generally—the "curious fact," as Leo Bersani puts it, "that the central figures in many nineteenth-century novels are the

vaguest or the most mystifying presences of the works in which they appear." While Bersani argues that these characters are either "*less* interesting psychologically than the novelists' other characters," or "have a kind of density dangerously close to unintelligibility" (Bersani, 66), *The Portrait of a Lady* permits us to understand this vagueness as constitutive even of the most charismatic protagonists. It also fosters insight into how unintelligibility may be a matter of disjunction as well as density, the effect of a process of characterization whereby centrality accumulates even as it is shed.

5. Coda

Color and Line

In this coda, I wish to suggest, however speculatively, that the genealogy of withheld minds traced in this dissertation might be extended into the twentieth century through the figure of racial passing. Like the others I examine, the figure of passing is a presence marked by negation, worthy of the reader's attention by virtue of the invisible portion of her racial identity. By the logic of passing narratives, the protagonist merits representation due to the suppression of an optical index of her genetic heritage: she is compelling as a subject because she appears to be white, when in fact she identifies as black, and this discrepancy—particularly within the context of racial segregation—permits her to pursue a subjecthood that she imagines to be richer and more complete. In other words, this discrepancy between racial *assignment*—the process by which the protagonist is seen to belong to one racial category based on her skin tone—and racial *identity*–whereby she aligns herself with its culturally-constructed "opposite"—enables a process of Bildung. That is, there is a way in which, within narratives of passing, light skin tone lends racial hybridity the quality of out-of-place-ness that traditionally propels protagonists through the world of a novel—an out-of-place-ness that, crucially, isn't shared by mothers, sisters, and friends of passing protagonists who are also "half-white" but have darker skin. Larsen's *Passing* and other narratives of passing, from Charles Chesnutt's *The House Behind the Cedars* (1899) to Jessie Redmon Fauset's *Plum Bun* (1928) are premised on the notion that crossing the "color line" enables one to shape one's own destiny—to lead a more remarkable life.

In this coda, I seek to graft the figure of passing onto the tradition I have been tracing throughout my dissertation: what is the diegetic visuality of the figure of passing? In

what sense does she descend from, or function as an afterlife to, the figures of withdrawal I discuss in my earlier chapters? In these remaining pages, then, I make a two-pronged attempt to construct, however provisionally, a literary heritage for these racially ambiguous Harlem Renaissance women that surpasses that of the nineteenth-century "tragic mulatta," from which they have typically been understood to depart[271] and, on the other, to posit a legacy for nineteenth-century forms of literary evasion. Indeed, I propose that early-twentieth-century incarnations of the minor protagonist embody the very figures—non-white, disenfranchised, persecuted, exterminated—that might be thought of as haunting the less politically freighted forms of absence, obliquity, or turning away that I discuss in chapters two, three, and four.

Focusing primarily on Nella Larsen's Jazz Age account of racial ambiguity in the interwar United States, *Passing* (1929), I argue that the protagonist, Clare Kendry, manifests only impressionistically on the plane of representation. By placing the novel in conversation with the visual arts, in particular impressionist painting and photography, I argue that in her second and final novel, Larsen is interested in the representation of luminosity itself. Thus, in my account, Larsen engages the trope of "passing" through a visual framework, literalizing compositional principles as a means to explore the aesthetic and epistemological dimensions of an experience most commonly inscribed within political and social frameworks. She is interested, I argue, in thinking about how the consciousness of the passer *sur*passes representation. At the same time, she creates a diegetic dynamic by which the attempt to fully represent, or open to empathy, the passer's consciousness would imperil the psychological coherence and integrity of her non-passing counterpart, Irene Redfield.

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[271] See Cheryl A. Wall, "Passing for What? Aspects of Identity in Nella Larsen's Novels," *Black American Literature Forum*, Vol. 20, No. 1 / 2 (Spring-Summer 1986), 97-111.

In *Second Skin: Josephine Baker and the Modern Surface*, Anne Anlin Cheng recuperates "raced skin"'s "visceral possibilities," seeking to wrest critical discourses of race and ethnicity from the vise of an over-emphasis on "skin color" rather than skin as a "modern material fascination."[272] Larsen is interested in the ways in which racially ambiguous skin, by enabling its owner to "pass," exempts her from the visual sphere in which race, as a marker of "otherness," primarily asserts itself while at the same time, by this exemption, transforming her into a kind of mediate lambency that draws or writes, in the manner of photography, those whom she illumines.[273] While critics have long noted that Larsen's earlier novel, *Quicksand* (1928), is a "meditation on color"[274] and discussed that text's participation in the diffuse enthusiasm, among Harlem Renaissance writers, for "collage-like imagery" as a means of "highlight[ing] the complexity of race,"[275] *Passing*'s visual investments have gone more or less unremarked. This is perhaps because the novel is less concerned with chromatic intensity than with translucence: against what might be thought of as the fauvist or Blaue Reiter-esque palette of *Quicksand*,[276] *Passing* explores a more impressionist fascination with irradiation and its effects. It may be, too, because scholarship on *Passing* has

[272] Anne Anlin Cheng, *Second Skin: Josephine Baker and the Modern Surface* (Oxford: OUP, 2011), 13-14.
[273] William Henry Talbot's "The Pencil of Nature," published in six fascicles between 1844 and 1846, first called photography a technique of yoking light to depict the empirical world. See Mary Warner Marien, *Photography: A Cultural History*, (New York: Pearson, 2010).
[274]Ann E. Hostetler, "The Aesthetics of Race and Gender in Nella Larsen's *Quicksand*," *PMLA*, Vol. 105, No. 1 (January 1990). 35-46, 35.
[275] Rachel Farebrother, *The Collage Aesthetic in the Harlem Renaissance*, (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009), 1. Rachel Farebrother begins her study of the "dynamic interplay between word and image" in Harlem Renaissance fictions by Zora Neale Hurston, Jean Toomer, and others, with a brief nod to the famous Jazz Club scene in *Quicksand* (1928), citing Larsen's description of "a sliding spectrum of colors, a 'moving mosaic'" as evidence of her cubist proclivities as a writer.
[276] The arresting description of Helga Crane with which *Quicksand* opens is steeped in dramatic oppositions between complementary colors: the young woman's "skin like yellow satin" is juxtaposed to her "blue-black hair" (*Quicksand*, 36), while the triadic arrangement of her "vivid green and gold negligee" and her bruise-colored curls evokes the striking juxtapositions in portraits like Henri Matisse's "Femme au Chapeau" (1905) or Alexej von Jawlensky's "Schokko mit Tellerhut" (1910). Rather than the strong antagonism and mutual enhancement of these "complementary" colors, *Passing* is more closely concerned with the subtle differences between "analogous" shades, which easily blend or fade into one another, as in Impressionism.

remained to a large extent in the grip of psychoanalytic hermeneutics[277] since Deborah McDowell first argued that the novel "passes" for a narrative about racial passing when it really deals with repressed lesbian desire.[278] Like McDowell, I argue in favor of reading *Passing* somewhat askance of race, but by placing Larsen in dialogue with the visual arts I aim to show that she deploys color and line in order to meditate on what was at stake in crossing the domestic "color line."[279]

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In *Passing*'s truncated opening scene, Larsen situates herself within the transatlantic history of genre painting by quietly but insistently alluding to Johannes Vermeer's iconic seventeenth-century portrait, "Woman in Blue Reading a Letter" ("*Brieflezende Vrouw*"). The novel begins with a moment of arrest when the protagonist, Irene Redfield, pauses in the midst of flipping through her stack of daily mail, surprised by "a long envelope of thin Italian paper" whose provenance she immediately intuits, despite the fact that it is a "sly thing which bore no return address to betray the sender" (*P*, 171). This "mysterious and slightly furtive" (*P*, 171) missive occasions a mental jump backward, which is narratively tracked in a lengthy flashback: Irene "seem[s] to see" (*P*, 172) her childhood friend, Clare

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[277] Readings of *Passing* as a text that "passes for passing," smuggling in various ideological commitments under the banner of racial passing, holds a prominent status within the secondary literature. See, for example, Mary Condé, "Passing in the Fiction of Jessie Redmon Fauset and Nella Larsen;" Ann E. Hostetler, "The Aesthetics of Race and Gender in Nella Larsen's *Quicksand*;" Jennifer DeVere Brody, "Clare Kendry's 'True' Colors: Race and Class Conflict in Nella Larsen's *Passing*;" and Gabrielle McIntire,"Toward a Narratology of Passing: Epistemology, Race, and Misrecognition in Nella Larsen's *Passing*."

[278] See Deborah McDowell, "Black Female Sexuality in *Passing*." McDowell's argument that, as Jennifer DeVere Brody succinctly puts it, "it is mistaken to place race at the center of any critical interpretation of Larsen" (1053) has been hugely influential on criticism of the novel.

[279] W.E.B. Du Bois first used this term in 1900 in an essay entitled, "The Present Outlook for the Dark Races of Mankind," to refer to a global phenomenon: "the color line belts the world and the social problem of the twentieth century is to be the relation of the civilized world to the dark races of mankind." See W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Problem of the Color Line at the Turn of the Twentieth Century: The Essential Early Essays*, Ed. Nahum Dimitri Chandler, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015). I refer to it here, and throughout this coda, as the political and social condition that defined American society with particular aggression during the century of de jure and de facto segregation between Reconstruction and the civil rights legislation of the mid-twentieth-century.

Kendry, "sitting on a ragged blue sofa, sewing pieces of bright red cloth together, while her drunken father…raged threateningly up and down the shabby room" (*P*, 172). This memory, whose own scrap-like quality is doubled by the literal bits of cloth that Clare has purchased with her wages (in defiance of her alcoholic father) and is calmly stitching into a "pathetic…frock" (*P*, 172), may itself be *fabric*ated. Yet for Irene, this memory and the letter in her hand are "of a piece" (*P*, 172), insofar as both express Clare's inclination to "[step] always on the edge of danger. Always aware, but not drawing back or turning aside…There had been, even in those days, nothing sacrificial in Clare Kendry's idea of life, no allegiance beyond her…desire" (*P*, 172).

Irene's corporeal stillness is broken when she wrests herself from this mental digression to open the letter and reluctantly scan the scribbled lines, among which the phrase "'that time in Chicago'…stood out from among the many paragraphs of other words" (*P*, 174). These four words prompt a second, longer recollection to which the remainder of the novel's first section is dedicated: Irene remembers her last meeting with Clare in Chicago two years earlier, when the two girlhood friends had unexpectedly run into one another after having fallen out of touch for twelve years.

At the beginning of section two, the narrative returns to the present to show Irene immobilized in a "flood of October sunlight" (*P*, 211), still clutching the pages of Clare's letter. Just as the heavily pregnant young woman in Vermeer's portrait, clad in an embroidered *beddejak* indicating that she is freshly awoken, tilts her neck toward the creased pages in her fingers, Irene Redfield—still in bed and softly gilded by a ray of sunlight—bends over a letter which she intuitively knows to have been sent by Clare, despite its

"slightly furtive"[280] lack of return address. Less immediately obvious, perhaps, but equally important, is this scene's evocation of Danish Golden Age painter Vilhelm Hammershøi's austere 1899 rendition of Vermeer's original, "Ida Reading a Letter" ("*Ida læser et brev*").

While scholars such as Arne Lunde and Anna Westerstahl Stenport have begun to advocate for Larsen's inclusion in a Scandinavian-American, as well as an African-American, canon, excavating her affinity for Modern Breakthrough writers such as Henrik Ibsen and Jen Peter Jakobsen,[281] Larsen's work also registers the influence of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century Nordic painters. In her late teens and early twenties, she had lived in Copenhagen for three years,[282] and it is probable that she would have visited both the Hirschsprung Collection of nineteenth-century Danish art, which opened in 1911 in the midst of her sojourn in the Danish capital, and the National Gallery (*Statens Museum for Kunst*), which had opened just over a decade earlier in the city center. Designed to house the Royal Collection of Paintings, which had been displayed in the Christiansborg Palace before it was destroyed by fire in 1884, the SMK's collection boasted a strong contingent of genre and landscape paintings by Danish Golden Age artists such as Cristoffer Wilhelm Eckersburg, as well as works of Nordic Impressionism and Symbolism by members of the *Skagensmalerne* and others. *Passing* is itself a "'study in contrasts'" (*P*, 235) that echoes the visual paradigm of Hammershøi's spare, neutrally-toned, tidily delineated interiors.

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Ironically, however, the character with whom Larsen most energetically contrasts

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[280] Nella Larsen, *Passing*, *The Complete Fiction of Nella Larsen*, Ed. Charles R. Larson (New York: Anchor Books, 2001), 171-275, 171. All further citations will be included parenthetically in the text using the abbreviation *P*.
[281] See Arne Lunde and Anna Westerstahl Stenport, "Helga Crane's Copenhagen: Denmark, Colonialism, and Transnational Identity in Nella Larsen's *Quicksand*."
[282] There is now a growing scholarly consensus, founded largely on George Hutchinson's remarkable biographical research into a sparsely documented life, that Larsen lived in the Danish capital between 1909-1912. See in particular Hutchinson, *In Search of Nella Larsen: A Biography of the Color Line* and "Nella Larsen and the Veil of Race."

Irene, her childhood friend Clare Kendry, is herself a series of inchoate impressions that have the effect of bringing out Irene for the reader, and a harsh glare under which Irene ultimately loses her composure. Larsen's characterization of Clare Kendry shares with the Impressionist idiom a devotion to "atmospheric effects,"[283] a prioritization of "looseness and seeming lack of finish,"[284] and an emphasis on what is "luminous, limpid, dazzling."[285] Within nineteenth-century academic painting, "line was associated with reason, for outline defined form intellectually without materiality," whereas color, "formed of matter itself, was connected primarily to the senses" through "its appeal to the eye."[286] Impressionism elevated color above line, and its chief innovation was to capture "passing" ephemera on canvas. The movement's founders favored al fresco composition, "sketching…on the spot notations derived directly from the motif" in order to record atmospheric effects on objects in their natural settings, and they were committed to portraying "instantaneous, fleeting appearances."[287] In *Passing*, Clare consists primarily of pops of color and streaks of light: she "sparkles," "glows," shines," and is often explicitly compared to the sun. Furthermore, she is hazy and undefined, occupying no clearly defined space. By "passing" as white, she has opted to move freely within a racist society that would consign her to strictly circumscribed spatial purviews were her blackness manifest on the surface of her body.

Irene becomes legible to the reader as the accumulation of effects that Clare, as a series of impressions, produces. In other words, Clare's amorphousness *draws* Irene literally as well as metaphorically: it renders her even as she is fascinated by it. Like the new technology of photography alongside which late-nineteenth-century painters developed

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[283] James H. Rubin, *Impressionism* (London: Phaidon, 1999), 14.
[284] Ibid., 31.
[285] Ibid, 24.
[286] Ibid., 32.
[287] Melissa McQuillan, *Impressionist Portraits*, (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 1986). 24.

impressionist sensibilities and techniques, Clare "transcends conventions of line and color to produce images literally formed in and drawn by light"[288] and functions, in this sense, as an "intermediary" through which impressions are made. On the one hand, the two protagonists play off one another chromatically; in the opening scene, for instance, the words of Clare's letter, "scrawl[ed]" in "purple ink" (*P*, 171), cause Irene to blush—"brilliant red patches flamed in [her] warm olive cheeks"—and this pairing of a primary and secondary color (purple and red) that abut on one another, suggest their mutually constituting nature. On the other hand, *Passing*, unlike *Quicksand*, is a novel of *ex*pression rather than *re*pression. Irene gains definition through her emotional reactions to Clare. While what Ngai calls "minor affects" such as "irritation" (*P*, 172) and "annoyance" (*P*, 192) feature in *Passing*, they are gradually outstripped by more dominant, cathartic emotions, such as "anger," "scorn," "fear." Irene, so enamored of self-restraint and holding back, considers such emotion "ill-timed" and "queer," (*P*, 221), but as the novel progresses the timeliness of letting "mood[s] [pass]" (*P*, 221) becomes increasingly untenable, until Irene is no longer able to let them to drift over her but is, rather, fully submerged by them.

Thus, there is a way in which—despite being contentless, and perhaps precisely because it is left unbeheld—Clare's brilliance melts Irene until composition and dissolution become coextensive. Clare, whose very name signifies light and diaphaneity, functions as a source of over-exposure that frazzles Irene's prim self-containment.[289] The latter's

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[288] Ibid.,34.

[289] Clare is heavily identified with the medium of light, too, insofar as she spills across and cannot be contained by places. Thadious Davis has noted that, "in keeping with the expected freedom of Modernist male subjects," Clare is much more fluid and transgressive than Irene. Racially, of course, Clare is in some sense out of place, since the figure of passing has crossed from one side of the "color line" to the other. Moreover, like the ex-coloured man in *Autobiography*, she is always "passing through" (see Kawash). As a cosmopolitan who has spent much of her married life abroad in Europe (her husband, John Bellew, works in international finance), Clare defies national boundaries, and even the foreign geographies through which she's transited—avant- and entre-guerre Europe—are themselves highly fluid. Europe in the peace years that succeeded WWI was a site of dissolving borders and disintegrated empires, but it was also a period during which nationalist boundaries

predilection for strict delineations is threatened by Clare's flippant disregard for them. If Irene and Clare instantiate color and line, respectively, they do so in ways that impinge on the space and integrity of one another's subjectivity. In *Ugly Feelings*, Sianne Ngai writes that "if every literary work has an organizing quality of feeling akin to an 'atmosphere,'… *Quicksand*'s famously enigmatic protagonist appears to have a microclimate of her own" (Ngai, 174). Clare Kendry, too, moves within a "nimbus"—although hers is one of radiance, rather than "'offishness,'" as in Helga Crane's case. Moreover, whereas Ngai argues that Helga's "signature aloofness" produces an "affective" atmosphere, Larsen is more interested in the visible dimensions of Clare's atmospheric properties. Clare behaves in ways that might be thought of as analogous to what Angela Miller calls "atmospheric luminism," which "fuses the elements" of a scene, "breaking down the spatial syntax" that gives it coherence.[290] In *Passing*, Larsen explores the tension between crisply defined composition and the blurred boundaries and mingled shades that index the presence of (be)dazzling light. Similarly, Clare can't be viewed or looked at directly. She is "'easy on the eyes,'" as Irene says at one point to her husband, Brian, because she lacks any hardness of form or firmness of content. She is a luster or a sparkle rather than a solid cognitive or psychological entity.

Irene enters a near-constant state of heightened emotional agitation after Clare re-

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became more rigid. Pre-war Europe was far more globalized and fluid, whereas in the aftermath of the armistice, passports were required for anyone crossing a national border. Clare, then, with many stamps in her passport, has been the object of a certain kind of state surveillance and documentation abroad, even as she avoids a certain kind of bureaucratic detection by passing as white in the US. Even as national borders galvanized in postwar Europe, it was also the site of cultural obsolescence and rejuvenation when many cultural conventions were pushed toward collapse. Significantly, Clare has been in Weimar Germany during the *goldene Zwanziger* that followed the disbandment of the Prussian Kingdom, enjoyed the *années folles* in Paris (where she would have coincided with Josephine Baker, La Ruche, Rue Blomet, and the Bal Negre), and spent time in Budapest after the fall of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. She wears, we are told, the Parisian fashion, which was heavily influenced during this period by drapier, clingier designs that submit to the curves of the body rather than imposing a specific silhouette on them. Indeed, the "dressmakers' shops" over whose openings Clare enthuses when she invites Irene to her apartment in Chicago would have included Rue Ste. Anne denizens such as Madeleine Vionnet, Chanel, the Callot Soeurs, Elsa Schiapparelli, and Jeanne Lanvin, who specialized in bias cuts and loose fabrics that swished and shimmied.

[290] Angela Miller, *The Empire of the Eye: Landscape Representation and American Cultural Politics, 1825-1875* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 244.

enters her life. Before their first "encounter," it seems that she has succeeded in maintaining a high degree of placidity in her home life and marriage. If there is disappointment and resentment between her and her husband over Irene's categorical refusal, several years earlier, to entertain his dream of moving to South America, any explicit rancor between them has long since been bridled, and they live, by Irene's lights, harmoniously. Irene prides herself on the fact that "she understood [Brian] so well, because she had, actually, a special talent for understanding him" (*P*, 218). At the same time, however, even within her marriage Irene stubbornly refuses to really read the other or consent to entering his consciousness: "That strange, and to her fantastic, notion of Brian's of going off to Brazil, which, though unmentioned, yet lived within him; how it frightened her, and—yes, angered her!" (*P*, 217). The idea that he retains desires that contradict hers is galling, and at the very end of the novel—as everyone gathers around Clare's fallen body—Irene must confront the fact that she has "so completely lost control of [Brian's] mind and heart" (*P*, 274).

This idea that the other's mind and heart might be controlled—rather than entered into, entertained, countenanced, and engaged with—ultimately destroys Irene, leading to paranoia and narrative unreliability: she cannot allow herself to be vulnerable to the kind of emotional uncertainty or mayhem that confronting or opening herself radically to someone else would entail, so she lives with the epistemological equivocality that ends in delusion. Like Katherine Mansfield's "Bliss," a short story first published in 1919 by which the "Finale" of *Passing* (and, indeed, much of the characterological structure of the story) seems heavily influenced, the entire novel is focalized through Irene, primarily in the form of free indirect discourse. In the final pages, this proximity to Irene becomes even more pronounced, morphing into stream of consciousness. This myopic, almost claustrophobic perspective doubles the claustrophobia of her refusal to capitulate to Brian's desire to leave

Harlem.

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At the same time that Larsen invokes the western genealogy of genre painting, she also pays tribute to the epistolary origins of the form of the novel.[291] The fact that this preliminary gesture toward a visual exemplum is interrupted by a detour into the deep, focalized interiority only accessible in narrative fiction foregrounds the ways in which the visual and the textual play off one another in *Passing*. While Irene (whose own name, it is worth mentioning, means "peace") is initially aligned, as I've suggested, with the isolated, gently illuminated, serene female figures in iconic works by Vermeer and Hammershøi, her "encounter" and "re-encounter" with the "unreadable" Clare[292] vitiate the soothing chiaroscuro and balanced composition of this imagery, leaving her, at the very end of the novel, once again alone and "quite still," but tormented by madness—even, we are encouraged to suspect, homicidal (*P*, 272). Thus Clare, whom Irene strenuously declines to "fathom" and from whom she seeks to withdraw even as she is irresistibly drawn toward her, denigrates Irene's formal neatness.

Whereas letters are understood as precursors to the elaborate portrayals of consciousness and complex inter-subjectivity in which the nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century novel specializes, written correspondence in *Passing* always occasions resisted or reluctant reading. In the opening scene, Irene "disliked the idea of opening…and reading" (*P*, 172) Clare's letter. Her active attempts to refrain from reading Clare, both literally and figuratively, are a kind of reverberation or epitaph to the ways in which Poe, Melville, and

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[291] See Watt, *The Rise of the Novel*.

[292] See Miriam Thaggert, "Racial Etiquette: Nella Larsen's *Passing* and the Rhinelander Case," for a detailed discussion of Clare's (il)legibility. Harrison-Kahan also points out that,"like illegible handwriting, Clare is hard to read" (Thaggert, 114).

James fretted over the reader's immersion in fictional minds. To occupy Clare's subject position would threaten the coherence and stability of Irene's own subjectivity. While Clare exercises over Irene "a fascination, strange and compelling" (*P*, 190), Irene is unwilling to live vicariously through Clare, or to permit Clare to live vicariously through her. Tellingly, at the end of the first "encounter" between Clare and Irene, Irene realizes

> that she hadn't asked Clare anything about her own life and that she had a definite unwillingness to do so. And she was quite well aware of the reason for that reluctance…If things with Clare were as she—as they all—had suspected, wouldn't it be more tactful to seem to forget to inquire how she had spent those twelve years? (184).

Yet, "it was that 'if' which bothered her. It might be, it might just be, in spite of all gossip and even appearances to the contrary, that there was nothing, had been nothing, that couldn't be simply and innocently explained. Appearances, she knew now, had a way sometimes of not fitting facts…" (185). But it is precisely this possibility that terrifies Irene. If Clare's life has not been what she has assumed, she would have to open herself to the risk of better understanding.

While Irene herself passes occasionally out of expediency, she expresses dismay to her husband, Brian, that Clare should long for a sense of connection to her "'poorer, darker, brethren'" (as she facetiously puts it) when Clare has deliberately chosen to live among white society: "'wouldn't you think that, having got the thing, or things, [she was] after, and at such risk, [she'd] be satisfied, or afraid?'" (*P*, 216). Furthermore, Irene is deeply unsettled by the personal intensities that this "risk" has likely cultivated:

> …into [Irene's] mind had come a thought…that had surprised and shocked her and driven her to her feet. It was that…the woman before her was…capable of heights and depths of feeling that she, Irene Redfield, had never known…[T]hat suspicion of Clare's ability for a quality of feeling…was to her strange and even repugnant. (*P*, 226)

Irene's almost visceral rejection of Clare's "heights and depths of feeling" suggests that to make herself available to them would hazard her own being.

Indeed, Larsen suggests an analogy between the experiential or affective glare in which Irene fears she might lose herself were she to seriously countenance it, and the force that light exerts on matter and perception. On the day that Irene and Clare coincide after their dozen years' separation, a "brutal…sun pouring down rays that were like molten rain" smolders over Chicago, causing the perimeters of buildings to "shudder" and reducing everything to "quivering lines," "dancing blaze[s]," and "blinding radiance" (*P*, 174). This meteorological heat and illumination, which nearly cause Irene to faint before she hails a cab to the upscale Drayton Hotel, presage Clare's "steady scrutiny" in the rooftop tearoom(*P*, 178), under which Irene will struggle to maintain her figurative cool. Irene (mis)interprets Clare's stare as an endangerment, insofar as it may precipitate her displacement from the elegant surroundings: "it was the idea of being ejected from a place that disturbed [Irene]" (*P*, 179). While she emerges intact from Clare's recognition (the latter has identified her not as a "passer," but as her childhood friend, Irene Westover), it will not remain possible to keep herself discrete from Clare, or to ensure that she doesn't encroach on her consciousness. The reader of *Passing* is only invited to inhabit Irene's perspective, but her monopoly on the space of representation becomes increasingly besieged by Clare's mounting disregard for the "color line," which the latter promises to (re-)transcend if her violently bigoted husband, John Bellew, discovers that she's been spending time in Harlem: "'I'd do what I want to do more than anything else…I'd come up here to live'" (*P*, 266), she confides to an aghast Irene just days before he crashes a party north of 110th Street and finds his wife among the guests.

We learn, in the early scene when she suffers under Clare's unabashed scrutiny at the Drayton, that her greatest fear in being "discovered" while passing is to be thrown out of an establishment: "it was the idea of being ejected from a place that disturbed her" (*P*, 179).

She also feels that the inability to "place" Clare is "more gratifying that disappointing" (*P*, 180). Clare has not occupied any of her mental space since they last saw each other twelve years before, whereas Clare attests to thinking of her frequently (182). Irene is alarmed by the elision of negative space between herself and Clare even in their first interview—"suddenly [Irene's] small fright increased. Her neighbor had risen and was coming towards her. What was going to happen now?" (*P*, 179)—and she strives throughout the novel to maximize the amount that separates them. Indeed, Irene is vehemently opposed to the idea of displacement, overlap, or physical proximity. She has sought refuge at the Drayton in part because she was caught in a conflagration of passers-by who had gathered around a collapsed pedestrian: "she edged her way out of the increasing crowd, feeling disagreeably damp and sticky and soiled from contact with so many sweaty bodies" (*P*, 175). The sensorial rhyme of the iced tea that Irene orders, the "tall green glass" in which it's served, the "blue of the lake" on which she gazes, and the vernal tones of Clare's "dress of green chiffon" (*P*, 176) augments the "cool" world of the Drayton's rooftop restaurant. The register of this early scene is, I would argue, distinct from the friction between nordic froideur and primitivist warmth in *Quicksand*.[293] Irene's pleasure in cool greens and blues indicates an aesthetic love of clean, sharp lines rather than, as Ngai might have it, frosty affect. She recoils from porosity, seepage, blending, and mixing: the Drayton's atmosphere soothes or fixes, in some sense, the throbbing boundaries outside. Indeed, Irene's horror of contamination extends to the mind itself, as shown by her anxieties about her young sons' minds being soiled with knowledge of sex and racism. Whereas Brian does not shrink from the idea that Junior and Theodore will be schooled in male-female relations and white brutality toward the "black" other, Irene is appalled by the idea that their innocence and

[293] See Ann Hostetler's discussion of Helga Crane's experiences in Denmark.

childish modesty will be sullied by such truths.

Passing aggressively cultivates ambiguity not only around the question of racial hybridity, but also around the problem of who may be understood as the novel's protagonist: perspectivally, of course, it is aligned with Irene; but Irene finds herself gravitating toward, and increasingly obsessed with, Clare. Critics have generally tended to settle the question by arguing that *Passing* has "dual protagonists,"[294] but it nevertheless persists because such a consensus disregards the destabilizing tensions that define Irene's and Clare's shared centrality. Scholarship has so far neglected the extent to which the novel's energies are marshaled around Irene's aborted readings, willful misprisions, and paranoid distortions of Clare. Irene's refusal to interpret, infiltrate, or empathize with Clare[295] is the manifestation of her wish to maintain strict divisions between them, even as they are always threatening to slip into one another. Even as Clare repeatedly transgresses, and exposes as arbitrary, the lines she draws, Irene insists on trying to enforce the distinctions to which they appeal.[296]

In a review of *Passing* that appeared in his journal, *The Crisis*, in July 1929, W.E.B. Du Bois praises the novel for disclosing the "psychology" of racial passing:

> [Larsen] explain[s] just what 'passing' is: the psychology of the thing; the reaction of it on friend and enemy. It is a difficult task, but she attacks the problem fearlessly and with consummate art. The great problem is under what circumstances would a person take a step like this and how would they feel about it? And how would their fellows feel?[297]

Yet, the "psychology" to which this act might give rise is precisely what Larsen avoids representing in her second novel. During a period in which writers largely understood their

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[294] See Lori Harrison-Kahan, "Her 'Nig' : Returning the Gaze of Nella Larsen's *Passing*."
[295] See McIntire.
[296] Irene's faith in strict divisions between black and white society corresponds disconcertingly with Bellew's. See Candice M. Jenkins, "Decoding Essentialism: Cultural Authenticity and the Black Bourgeoisie in Nella Larsen's *Passing*" for a more sustained analysis of how Irene's desire for bourgeois security affiliates her ideologically with the white racist hegemony
[297] See W.E.B. Du Bois, "Review of *Passing*," *Du Bois: A Reader*, Ed. David Levering Lewis, (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1995).

task to be that of capturing "experience *while it is passing*,"[298] Larsen considers how the experience of "passing" *escapes* representation. She thus plays on the temporal profile of passing privileged in modernist fiction—fleeting moments registered in techniques such as stream-of-consciousness—by suggesting that to cross the color line, which Larsen herself was (significantly, perhaps) never able to do, is to exceed the very bounds of representation. Larsen considers how the experience of racial passing itself, when it has been undertaken as a means of acquiring existential advantages and therefore attained the narrative status of *Bildung*,[299] renders the psychology that it has fleshed out *less* tangible and more inaccessible: "no matter how often [Clare] came among them, she still remained someone apart, a little mysterious and strange, someone to wonder about and to admire and to pity" (*P*, 239). To "pass" permanently, then, is to be ontologically diminished, rather than enriched. As Clare writes to Irene, "in this pale life of mine I am all the time seeing the bright pictures of that other that I once thought I was glad to be free of…" (*P*, 174). The experience of passing thus both etiolates one's own sense of one's subjectivity and makes it too perilous for others to confront.

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What happens when we shift critical emphasis from the gerund to the adjectival form of passing? In *Passing* and other contemporaneous novels of passing such as *Plum Bun*, the act of passing is most narratively compelling when it is a temporary (passing) state. When sustained over time, the growth, development, or change it may allow can't be accommodated within the scope of the diegesis. Thus, the figure of passing is doomed, not

[298] Mary Austin, "The American Form of the Novel," *The Novel of Tomorrow and the Scope of Fiction*, (Brooklyn, NY: Braunworth & Co. Book Manufacturers, 1922), 11-24, 14.
[299] Harrison-Kahan similarly argues that passing has this narratological and ontological function: "passing is not only the theme of the novel or its textual strategy, but it is a way of being and becoming for both the female protagonists."

in the extrinsically determined way of the "tragic mulatta," but in the sense that the experience of passing prohibits her from full-fledged representation. This, I want to suggest, may have to do with the fact that passing, most commonly regarded as an act of will, is on closer examination an act of radical, even self-effacing, passivity. It even borders on involuntariness insofar as it consists of acquiescence to mistaken (or, only partially accurate) assumptions about one's race. On some level, then, the figure of passing simply declines to disabuse others of their misconceptions about her racial identity: the figure of passing does not declare herself "white" so much as she abstains from renouncing the racial classification that society grants, and passing is thus fundamentally closer to velleity than volition.[300]

Ironically, passing defies representation when it is protracted. It is when the experience of passing passes from spontaneous "lark[301] to existential condition that ceases to be morally acceptable or narratively interesting—in other words, to be worth the effort of empathy, the dignity of recognition, or the desire for vicariousness. In *Passing*, in particular, the experience is ethically permissible only when it is short-lived and meaningless; indeed, if it counts formatively, as a technique through which to acquire the kind of subjecthood one desires, it ends up failing to produce a viable subject who can assert her prerogatives and lay claim to her desires.[302] Clare's lack of narrative autonomy is foregrounded in a painful scene in which she invites Irene and another bi-racial friend (both of whom are also able to pass)

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[300] Jessie Redmon Fauset's *Plum Bun* starkly foregrounds the extent to which "passing" implies a renunciation or problematization of agency. Angela Murray's anguished decision to declare solidarity with her fellow art pupil, who has been denied a prestigious scholarship to study painting in Paris, by announcing that she ("Angèle"), too, is "'colored"' demonstrates the extent to which *not* passing counts much more emphatically as an act.

[301] This is the word that Angela Murray's mother, who like her daughter is light-skinned enough to "pass," uses for her own escapades in white society. She is married to a darker-skinned man, and Angela's younger sister Jinny is too dark to "pass."

[302] In Jessie Redmon Fauset's *Plum Bun*, this attenuated subjectivity manifests itself in a somewhat contrived conceit: as mentioned above, Angela's non-passing sister, Jinny, unwittingly becomes engaged to the man whom Angela loves (and who loves her in return). Despite requital, this love can't be consummated or enjoyed because both parties (Anthony and Angela) feel that their right to one another has been compromised by the postponements necessitated by the demands of passing.

into her Chicago home, where their polite afternoon tea is interrupted by Clare's racist husband, who subjects them to offensive opinions against which they are powerless to defend themselves. Clare seems to have orchestrated this event, to Irene's horror, but not because—as Irene surmises—she derives some perverse satisfaction from putting her friends through "such humiliation" (*P*, 206). Rather than being an inscrutable "joke" (*P*, 205), Clare's act is an invitation to enter into her experience, which Irene—terrified of being moved or touched by that experience—cannot accept. During Jack Bellew's racist tirade, Irene sneaks a glance at Clare:

> Irene turned an oblique look on Clare and encountered her peculiar eyes fixed on her with an expression so dark and deep and unfathomable that she had for a short moment the sensation of gazing into the eyes of some creature utterly strange and apart. A faint sense of danger brushed her, like the breath of a cold fog." (201).

Later that evening, Irene puzzles again over the "look on Clare's face as she had said goodbye" (206): "[Irene] stood at her window frowning out into the dark rain and puzzling over that look on Clare's incredibly beautiful face. She couldn't, however, come to any conclusion about its meaning, try as she might. It was unfathomable, utterly beyond any experience or comprehension of hers" (*P*, 206). If Irene is entirely unable to "fathom" her friend, it seems to be because the "experience" to which Clare seeks to give her access so far exceeds her own. Thus, Larsen considers the peril of assuming the mantle of another alterity, or entering into her mind. In a scene both reminiscent and prophetic of the opening scene of the novel, Clare sends a note of contrition the following day that Irene postpones opening: "she wouldn't, she told herself, read it" (*P*, 207). Eventually, "possessed of an uncontrollable curiosity," she relents—but the contents of Clare's apology fail to appease her, and she "tore the offending letter into tiny ragged squares" (*P*, 208), tossing these shreds over the edge of the train car's railing.

If, in narratives of passing, there is almost always a distinction made between

frivolous or momentarily convenient passing and passing chronically, as a way of life, in both cases the bi-racial character understands the advantages (ease, expediency, preferential treatment, even simplicity) of passing and takes pleasure in the experience. The fundamental difference between these two modes of passing, then, is merely duration: the first is fleeting and doesn't interfere with the passer's inscription within her black family unit, her black community, and her black identity. The second is prolonged, and often permanent, displacing the passer from the black milieus of her childhood and adolescence to white environments where the price of her exposure would be devastating, even deadly. Far from making one "acceptable anywhere,"[303] as Anthony Dawahare argues, passing over the color line in fact limits one's "currency" or creditworthiness to one side of it. Passing historically entailed the forfeiture of one's ability to circulate (prudently) within black society,[304] an inability that is keenly rendered in the scene with Bellew. Passing is only "a way to circulate like money" insofar as it restricts one to a rigidly specified ambit.

At a time when Modernist writers were producing fragmented, formally experimental, and highly abstract compositions, often inspired by the intersecting and repetitive shapes of Cubism, *Passing* has a more traditional, aerated composition that exudes composure and calm rather than hectic confusion. There are three sections, each relatively commensurate in length, of which the first two are entitled "Encounter" and "Re-Encounter" and the third is entitled "Finale." Furthermore, this tripartite form is echoed in the three principal figures to further reinforce this symmetry: Irene Redfield, her husband, Brian, and Clare Bellew, née Kendry, a childhood friend of Irene's.

"Finale," the closing movement of a symphony, sonata, concerto, or opera, alludes

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[303] See Anthony Dawahare, The Gold Standard of Racial Identity in Nella Larsen's *Quicksand* and *Passing*."
[304] See Allison Hobbs, *A Chosen Exile: A History of Racial Passing in American Life*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014).

most directly to musical composition; but it also suggests composition in the narrative sense, in the form of dénouement, as well as spatial configuration—the moment when, colloquially speaking, all pieces fall into place. While Larsen's novels are considered far less formally experimental or narratively fragmented than those of fellow Modernists such as Gertrude Stein, William Faulkner, Jean Toomer, and others, I want to suggest here that her novels, in particular *Passing*, are nevertheless highly engaged with questions of organization and arrangement. Even as she resists the ambient vogue for cubist sensibilities and techniques, she finds in the idiom of late-nineteenth-century impressionism a visual language that enables her to think more effectively about what is at stake in the act of racial passing, and by attending to this somewhat nostalgic aesthetic gesture we can appreciate the radicalism of a novel that appears formally conservative. Rather than portray a subject from a variety of imbricated, incommensurate perspectives that nevertheless culminate in something like an identifiable whole, Larsen withholds the subject altogether.

The term "encounter" designates a conflict between adversarial forces, and it belongs to a semantic field that is heavily martial, as indicated by its synonyms: "battle," "skirmish," "duel." It also designates an instance of unexpected congress: coincidence both in the literal sense of inhabiting the same space at the same time and in the figurative sense of surprise.[305] Indeed, the main action of *Passing*'s first portion revolves around its two protagonists, Irene Redfield and Clare Kendry, convening unintentionally in the same spot: Clare is, in fact, the last person Irene expects to see at a fine hotel such as the Drayton, and she betrays her dismay by exclaiming, "'it's awfully surprising'" (*P*, 180). This coincidence, both as spatial simultaneity and unforeseeable occurrence, is precisely what Irene spends the remainder of the novel recovering from, and whose *re*occurrence she expends copious

[305] Definitions and etymology taken from The OED.

amounts of energy attempting to avoid or forestall.

Crucially, it is at the moment when Clare becomes fully constituted as a subject in her own right—"as composed as if everyone were not staring at her"—that Irene must eliminate her. John Bellew's entrance into Felice's home signifies Clare's future encroachment on Irene's space: the novel implies that she will, now that her husband knows she is black, move up to Harlem, establishing a home and a future there. Irene, who is so firmly rooted to Harlem, who cannot imagine uprooting or displacing herself and her family, is existentially threatened by the idea that Clare will relocate to northern Manhattan, rather than return to Switzerland where her daughter, Margery, is in boarding school. The possibility of coincidence is intolerable; indeed, the entire novel chronicles Irene's attempt to shake off the residue of the coincidence of her encounter with Clare. This becomes impossible in the novel's "Finale," when Irene has her epiphany—whose veracity is never confirmed—that Clare and Brian are having an affair. Irene "half succeed[s]" (256) at "shut[ting] out the knowledge from which had arisen [her] turmoil" (256):

> For, she reasoned, what was there, what had there been, to show that she was even half correct in her tormenting notion? Nothing. She had seen nothing, heard nothing. She had no facts or proofs. She was only making herself unutterably wretched by an unfounded suspicion. It as been a case of looking for trouble and finding it in good measure. Merely that. (256)

This (specious) revelation undoes Irene, whose mind soon unravels entirely when it is further shaken by Clare's imminent move to Harlem. No longer a partial sketch—a streak of light or splash of color—characterized primarily through her effects on Irene, Clare at the moment of Bellew's discovery is suddenly autonomous and self-contained: "[she] stood at the window, as composed as if everyone were not staring at her" (*P*, 271). No longer a passing figure, she is evacuated of atmospheric qualities and restored to solidity—only to be immediately destroyed by the forces of gravity.

{Conclusion}

Finishing this dissertation has entailed, for me, as it no doubt does for many, a certain amount of grief over the dissertation I wish I'd written. In the three years it has taken me to eke out these pages, I have often fantasized about the others I might have written—bolder, more knowledgeable, less torturous. Of course, I realize that without this inaugural trial (in all senses of the term), I could never write, eventually, the book I aspire to. Or, perhaps, I have begun to write that book—which itself will probably, when "finished," also feel far from complete. Rather than mourn this beginning for all that it lacks, then, I might find joy in its incipience and happily anticipate the intellectual pleasures that await me during the next phase of its development. I might also be reassured that whatever regrets make the end of this project's gestation bittersweet also reflect the intellectual growth I've undergone in the course of it. It makes a certain sense, after all, that a project encompassing three years can't help but develop an archaeological, if not artifactual, patina. That I now find myself interested in historical questions and contexts not represented here, or have a better idea of how this project might be annexed to different philosophical traditions and debates than those that underpin it now, is probably all to the good.

That said, a conclusion is a place to reflect on what has achieved. In this study I've sought to produce fresh, lively, and responsible readings of important texts by major mid-nineteenth- to early-twentieth-century American authors and tried to illuminate the pivotal role that para-novelistic forms, circumspect toward the over-weening qualities of novelistic realism, played during a period generally thought to be dominated by it. I have also endeavored to demonstrate that an attunement to the aesthetics and edifications of evasion and withdrawal animated this counter-thrust to realist transparencies.

I have tried, furthermore, to show that, taken together, the texts I discuss constitute a sustained meditation on the frustrations and enticements of fictional minds that remain impervious to or register as unwelcome narrative and diegetic regard(s) lend themselves to discontinuation rather than further iteration, resulting in an aesthetics of slightness, and a correlative affects of slight*ed*ness, that emerge not only in opposition to the novel—in sub-canonical forms such as the tale, novella, and romance—but thrive within the precincts of late-century psychological realism itself. To reduce my dissertation to its most basic lines of inquiry, it asks why nineteenth-century audiences were thought to read, how the affordances of fictional worlds were conceptualized and experienced, and how we as twenty-first-century scholars might alternatively frame the ways in which nineteenth-century authors were thinking seriously, and in multifarious ways, about the encumbrances of the subjectivities they created. How can centrality be a felt burden, rather than a formal advantage? What does representation steal from character, or steal readers from? I have been interested in these questions, in one form or another, for a very long time. These pages are a small deposit toward a satisfactory answer, which I hope to keep shoring up as I continue to explore them.

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